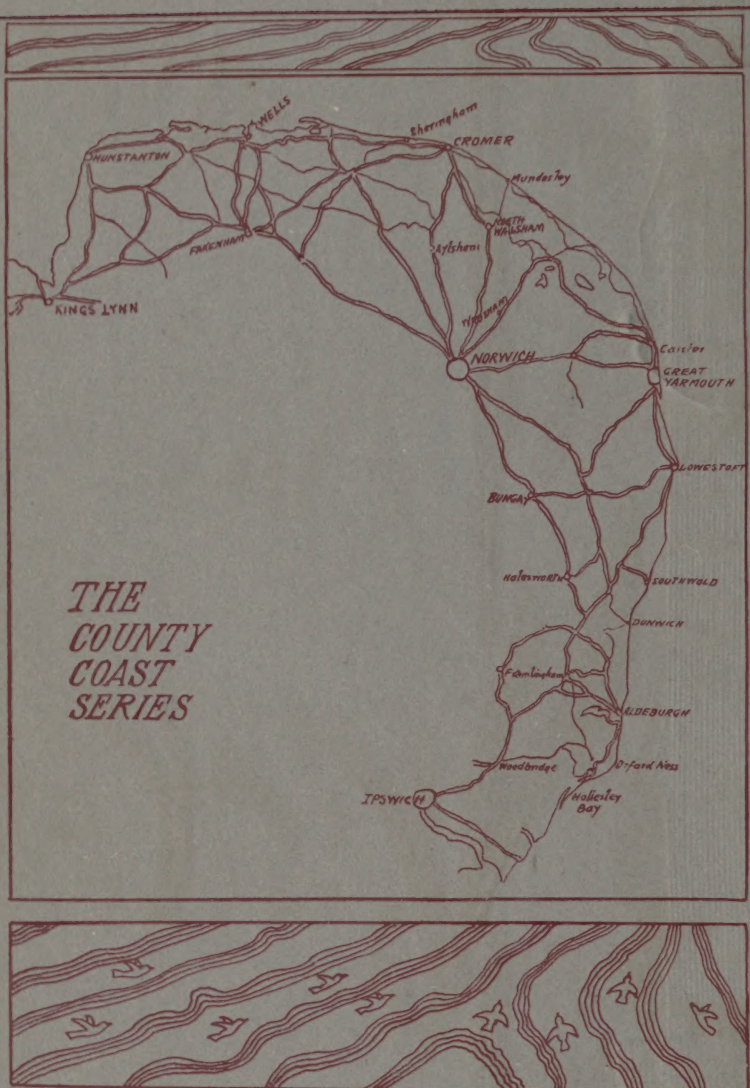
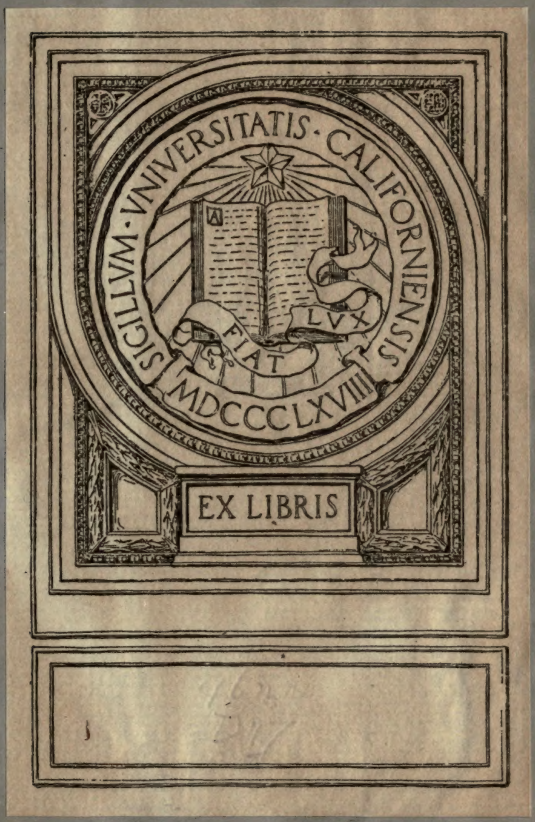
THE COUNTY COAST SERIES

THE NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK COAST

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From a water-colour drawing by O. Dexter

BAWDSEY FERRY

The Norfolk and Suffolk Coast

By W. A. Dutt

Illustrated



New York
Frederick A. Stokes Company
Publishers

DA 670
N6D95

TO

MY FATHER

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ROAD MAPS OF THE NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK COAST

To tourists intending to visit the Norfolk and Suffolk Coast some information about road maps may be useful. For pedestrians—and it is only by pedestrians that many of the most delightful spots along the coast can be explored—the well-known one mile to one inch Ordnance Survey maps are by far the best; and as they can be obtained compactly folded, they are easily carried in the pocket or knapsack. I have always used these maps, and never found them fail me; while they have revealed to me innumerable pleasant footpaths and delightful byways with which I might never have become acquainted. To cyclists the two miles to one inch maps are very useful, for they cover fairly large areas, and yet are remarkable for detail and clearness; while to motorists the four miles to one inch maps are specially recommended. The numbers of the maps covering the Norfolk and Suffolk Coast are:—

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W. A. D.

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The Norfolk and Suffolk Coast

CHAPTER I

FELIXSTOWE

"Is there a corner of land, a furze-fringed rag of a byway,
Coign of your foam-white cliffs or swirl of your grass-green waves,
Leaf of your peaceful copse, or dust of your strenuous highway,
But in our hearts is sacred, dear as our cradles, our graves?"
E. NESBIT.

"I wandered through the wrecks of days departed,
Far by the desolated shore."—SHELLEY.

IT can be paradoxically said of the Norfolk and Suffolk coast that the only thing permanent about it is change.

Twenty years ago, whilst walking along the seashore of a village near the easternmost point of England, I crossed a tract of maram-grassed sand-dunes and stayed to talk with a lifeboat coxswain who was coiling ropes in a lifeboat house on the beach. Having chatted for a while with that grey-bearded, ruddy-cheeked 'longshoreman, I climbed the grassy slope of a low cliff, and found myself on a kind of village green,

enclosed on three sides by buildings, including an ancient manor-house, a beachmen's shelter, an old inn, and a row of fishermen's cottages. On the north side of the green, the main street of the village ran nearly to the cliff, where it turned northward and was bordered on its seaward side by substantially built houses, each standing in its own grounds and facing the sea. Southward, beyond the inn and the beachmen's wooden shed, the face of the cliff was hidden by tiers of cement bathing-huts; while about fifty yards inland a large house, recently built, stood in a walled garden on the highest ground of the village.

Last year I returned to the village and, seeing it from the seashore, I failed to recognise it. Where the undulating sand-hills had protected the base of the cliff, there was a tract of sea-scoured sand and shingle; the lifeboat-house had disappeared; and far back from where the footpath had led up to the green, the cliff showed a precipitous front to the sea. After walking half a mile southward along the shore, I reached a gap in the cliff, by which I climbed to the higher ground, and, turning northward, I looked for the cottage-bordered village green. Not a vestige of it was to be seen, and where it had been the waves were breaking on a shingly shore. Gone were the ancient manor-house, the old inn, the beachmen's shelter, and a dozen or more of the fishermen's cottages; while two or three of the houses that remained were tottering on the verge of the cliff, looking as though at any moment they might collapse and shower down bricks and tiles to mingle with the masses of fallen brickwork lying half-embedded in the beach.

Passing round the back of these endangered cottages, I entered the village street. There, too, the land had been eaten away; so that the street had become a *cul-de-sac*, ending on the edge of the cliff; the houses that had bordered it at its seaward end had either "gone down-cliff" or been pulled down. Southward of the site of the green, a crumbling cliff, ruined houses, and huge blocks of cement lying strewn about the beach told the same story—the story of the sea's siege of the East Anglian coast.

It is a tale of to-day, but like *Cath-loda* it is also "a tale of the times of old." From Langer Point to the sea-walled shore of Marshland, there is scarcely a town or village that has not watched the slow advance of its ancient enemy, that has not seen its church, its homesteads, or its fields laid waste and finally sink into the sea; and to-day there are miles of the coast where you can never be sure that the cliff-top footpath or the sand-hill slope you are treading will not in a day, a month, or a year be undermined or washed away. At the beginning of the historical period, the Britons of East Anglia, directed by their Roman masters, were heaping up huge banks to keep the sea from overflowing the low-lying fens; in Saxon times harbours were being blocked up with silt and sand; and during all the centuries that have passed since then the coast-dwellers of East Anglia have been fighting, in one place or another, a battle with the sea. Here and there land has been won from the waves, so that corn is grown and cattle feed where the seagull wheeled above the wave-crests; but along many miles of coast the sea has been constantly gaining upon the land, destroying here a town,

there a village, and elsewhere a church, a monastery, a farmstead, or the humble home of some fisherman or farm-hand. Along the Suffolk coast alone, at Walton, a Roman fortress; at Aldeburgh, the whole of a street; and at Easton, a promontory that was the easternmost point of England have entirely disappeared; while Dunwich, which was one of the most important towns in the Eastern counties, is now a small village, robbed of all save one of its ancient churches; and the port of Orford has been almost destroyed by the wide-strewn *débris* of the Dunwich cliffs. Further northward, Great Yarmouth has come into existence within historical times, on a great bank of sand deposited at the mouth of what was once a wide estuary, and on the North Norfolk coast hundreds of acres of salt marsh have been embanked and reclaimed; but from Yarmouth to Wells there is scarcely a parish that has not lost much of its land, while at least a score of parishes have completely vanished. Scores of people still dwelling on the coast have slept soundly in their beds where now the land is covered by the lowest tides; 'longshore fishermen spread their nets where they have stood in the midst of growing corn.

About fifty years ago, when Mackenzie Walcott made a peregrination of the East Coast of England, and wrote a description of it "illustrated by the remarks of distinguished authors," he had nothing to say about Felixstowe save that from Landguard Fort a range of sand-hills, extending over two miles of coast, was succeeded by low cliffs that reached to Bawdsey. The idea one gets from his very readable little book is that



HARWICH HARBOUR.

[*To face p.* 14.

any one landing on the southernmost point of the Suffolk coast would find himself on a bleak and barren shore, frowned down upon by the forbidding bastions of an ancient fort; and that in the opinion of a confessed seeker after the picturesque and romantic it was a place to be taken leave of as quickly as possible. That the "low cliffs" which he seemed to think were scarcely worthy of mention would become in the course of a few years the most attractive feature of one of the prettiest watering-places on the coast can hardly have entered his mind; so it is not surprising that he hastened on to Aldeburgh without remarking upon the antiquity of Felixstowe or the important historical personage whose name is embodied in that of the town. Fifty years ago, however, Felixstowe was rarely referred to by historians and topographers except as a portion of Walton, a place upon which the sea had made considerable encroachment, but which was, as Kirby says, "A Place of great Note, as well before, as for some ages after the Conquest"; and as the bounds of Walton seem to have been somewhat vaguely defined, a stranger to the district may well be excused if he fail to make any definite assertion about it until he feels himself on surer ground.

What remains of this Walton to which so great an early importance is assigned may be looked upon as part of Felixstowe; but most of the evidences of its antiquity have been swept away by the sea. More than a century and a half ago some mighty "Stone-works," as they were called, existed on the edge of the cliff and extended nearly 200 yards inland, constituting the foundations of the western wall of what had been

a Roman fortress. What this wall was like is unrecorded. Probably, it resembled those at Burgh Castle, where we see the—

> "Indurate flint, and brick in ruddy tiers,
> With immemorial lichen frosted o'er";

for the Romans, when they built a *castellum* for the protection of the Saxon shore made it a stronghold against which neither plundering pirate nor incensed Iceni could prevail. Here, as at Burgh Castle, there was the mouth of a wide estuary to be guarded, and although the last vestige of the ancient fortress has disappeared, relics in the shape of fibulæ, armlets, coins, and sepulchral urns are preserved in public and private collections to testify to the presence at Felixstowe of the wardens of an outpost of the Roman Empire. In later times the stones of the camp were used in the building of a Norman castle at Walton; but long before then an event had happened which led to a part of the manor of Walton being known as Felixstowe. This was the landing, probably near Lynn on the Norfolk coast, of Felix of Burgundy, whom King Sigebert had sent for in order that he might Christianise the pagan East Angles. The first Christian church in East Anglia is supposed to have been built at Babingley, a parish now forming part of the King's Sandringham estate; but Felix's see is said to have been at Dunwich, and near the mouth of the Orwell he appears to have had a "stowe," or holding, which became known as Felixstowe. Such at any rate is the traditional origin of the name of this popular health and holiday resort; that the tradition is an old one is suggested by

the fact that when a Benedictine priory was founded here it was dedicated to St. Felix.

Among the chief benefactors of this priory were the Bigods, Earls of Norfolk, one of whom, Hugh Bigod, was lord of the manor at the time when Robert Beaumont, Earl of Leicester, arrived with an army of Flemings at Walton, bent on supporting the cause of Prince Henry against his father, Henry II. Leicester first, it is recorded, proposed to make a landing at Dunwich, the capture of which would have provided him with an excellent base from which to conduct further operations; but in an old manuscript preserved in the British Museum it is stated that when his ships approached that town "the strength thereof, it was terror and feare unto him to behould it, and soe retyred both he and his people." At Walton he met with a friendly welcome from the rebel Earl Bigod, whose castle commanded the ancient Wadgate Haven; and when his Flemings, after making an unopposed landing, had been joined by Bigod's men, they marched to Framlingham, where the Bigods had another stronghold. Shortly afterwards Haughley Castle, held by Ralph de Broc for the King, was taken by them; but while they were advancing towards Bury St. Edmunds they were met by Humphrey de Bohun, the King's Constable, who inflicted upon them a severe defeat. This was the last occasion, save one, on which a foreign force succeeded in gaining a foothold on the Suffolk coast. In 1667, when the Dutch fleet, under De Ruyter, caused great consternation by its daring dash up the Thames and Medway, Suffolk came in for a share of its attention, 3,000 men, after landing near the mouth of the Orwell, creeping under cover of the sand-

hills to within musket range of Landguard Fort, which they attacked for two hours with their small arms. The garrison was unable to return their fire, owing to the guns being mounted for a longer range; but an armed vessel lying in the harbour contrived, by firing at the beach, to rattle so much shingle about the Dutchmen's ears that they were glad to retreat to their ships.

Walton Castle, with the other Bigod strongholds in Suffolk, was dismantled by Henry II., after the Flemings' defeat; and although Edward III. once occupied a palace or hall which was erected after the destruction of the castle, Walton-cum-Felixstowe seems to have slumbered peacefully for several centuries without having its rest disturbed save on the occasion when the Dutchmen became troublesome. It must always, however, have had an interest in seafaring matters, especially in voyages of maritime discovery; for Harwich, whose harbour Felixstowe can also claim as its own, has been for centuries the chief port of communication with Holland, many of the old three-decker men-of-war were built on the shores of the harbour, and past the batteries of the old fort Martin Frobisher, with fifteen ships, sailed on his third voyage to explore the North-West Passage, and Thomas Candish, who must have been well known in Felixstowe, set out to circumnavigate the globe. Daniel Defoe, who saw the harbour from its Essex shore, described it as being of "vast extent" and "able to receive the biggest ships of war." "In the old Dutch war," he writes "great use has been made of this harbour, and I have known that there has been one hundred sail of men-of-war and their attendants, and between three and four hundred sail

of collier ships, all in this harbour at a time, and yet none of them crowding or riding in danger of one another." At the present time gunboats, destroyers, and submarines frequently make use of it, and H.M.S. *Camperdown*, which rammed and sank H.M.S. *Victoria*, is stationed here as guardship.

A tract of sandy waste land, overgrown with some of the least attractive of the wild plants of the seashore, lies between Landguard Fort and Felixstowe; north-easterward of the town a pleasanter expanse of slightly undulating open ground borders the low-banked estuary of the Deben. Between these sandy tracts, at the base and on the slope and crest of a Red Crag cliff, the modern town, with its hotels, its cliff gardens, its spa, and its numerous "attractions" for visitors, has sprung into existence, its popularity having increased remarkably since 1891, when the German Empress and the Crown Prince paid it a visit. Railway enterprise—there are three stations in this little town—has done much to bring to it those holiday-makers who are content to take their pleasures quietly, while the Coast Development Corporation, whose Belle steamers land and take up passengers every day during the holiday season, has built here its longest pier. Of all the watering-places on the Suffolk coast it presents, to those who approach it by sea, the most picturesque appearance, and as it is the only East Anglian seaside town with a southern aspect its inhabitants are justified in boasting of its natural advantages. Situated about midway between the beautiful estuary of the Orwell and the placid waters of the Deben, with Orford and its Norman castle made easily accessible by a four-horse coach drive, and with Southwold,

Lowestoft, and Yarmouth easily reached by means of the steamers, Felixstowe should never fail to attract a considerable proportion of the summer visitors to the East Anglian coast.

The Orwell is rich in historical and romantic associations, most of which have the salt savour of the sea about them. On its banks have dwelt some of our most renowned seamen, noteworthy among whom being Vernon, the victor of Porto Bello, and Sir Philip Broke, the hero of the famous fight between the *Shannon* and the *Chesapeake;* while its creeks and hamlets were the haunts of daring smugglers who kept the Preventive men busy from Ipswich to Harwich and from Felixstowe to the inlets and marshes around Orford Ness. Pin Mill, Nacton Creek, and Downham Reach—names familiar to readers of "Margaret Catchpole"—witnessed exciting scenes in the old "free-trading" days, and although more than sixty years have passed since the Rev. Richard Cobbold published what a distinguished critic has called "the classic novel of Suffolk," there has been little change in the old-world inns and hamlets bordering the estuarine Orwell. That "Margaret Catchpole," despite the real existence of its heroine, is chiefly a work of fiction matters little when one recognises that it gives a fairly true account of the wild, lawless life of the Suffolk smugglers, and no one can explore the shores of the Orwell, hear the stories told by the old folk in the villages, and look, perhaps, into one of the ancient hiding-places for smuggled goods, without realising that a large proportion of the trade between Holland and Suffolk must have been contraband. At Pin Mill, the riverside portion of the parish of Chelmondiston, the Butt and

Oyster Inn is said to have been a favourite resort of smugglers in the intervals of cargo-running; and sitting at one of its windows, and watching the brown-sailed barges slowly tacking up or down the river, one cannot help thinking what queer company its roof must have sheltered a century or more ago. No doubt there were strange arrivals at and departures from the primitive quay adjoining the river. Who knows if Will Laud, Margaret Catchpole's unworthy lover—who also had a real existence—may not have started from it on some of his dangerous escapades? The innkeeper, however, was not the only dweller on or near the coast who was well paid to have a "blind eye" when strange visitors entered his house at unusual hours. Just as he grumbled very little if he were roused from his bed by gruff-voiced horsemen who seemed unaccustomed to the heavy farm-horses they rode, so the farmer was little disquieted when he went to his stable in the morning and found that his horses had been "hag-ridden" during the night.

One may or may not feel proud of the fact that English sailors who were ready to give their lives for their country were equally ready to risk them for the sake of smuggling ashore a keg of brandy; but there is one spot near Felixstowe and the Orwell which no Englishman can visit without being reminded of the days when a spirit of adventure, tinctured with the greed of gain, led men to sail out of the quiet waters of the Thames, the Dart, and the Orwell, and establish England's dominion over the seas. That spot is Trimley St. Martin, where a farmhouse, surrounded by some fine old trees, occupies the site of Grimstone Hall, in which was born that famous Elizabethan navi-

gator, Thomas Candish. He was, in all probability, no ready penman, or he might have left us a stirring story of the sea; but in a few words he revealed himself a worthy contemporary of Drake and Raleigh, and gave expression to that adventurous spirit which casts such a glamour of romance over Elizabeth's reign. "It has pleased the Almighty," he wrote, "to suffer me to circompasse the whole globe of the world, entering in at the streight of Magellan, and returning by the Cape de Buena Esperanza. In which Voyage I have either discovered or brought certeine Intelligence of all the rich places of the world that ever were knowen or discovered by any Christian. I navigated along the Coast of Chili, Peru, and Nueva Espana, where I made great Spoiles; I burnt and sunke nineteen Sailes of Ships small and great. All the Villages and Townes that ever I landed at, I burnt and spoiled; and had I not been discovered upon the Coast, I had taken great Quantitie of Treasure."

Thomas Candish appears to have inherited considerable wealth, but leading the life of a courtier, in enjoyment of the smiles of Elizabeth, tended to impoverish him, and in 1585 he was glad to join one of the numerous expeditions organised by his friend Sir Walter Raleigh, and accompany the brave and chivalrous Sir Richard Grenville to the newly discovered land of Virginia. He commanded his own vessel, a small one of 120 tons burden; but ill-fortune accompanied the enterprise, and the settlers whom Grenville landed were soon glad, on account of the pinch of famine, and the attacks of the Indians, to return home with Drake's fleet, then homeward bound from the West Indies. Our Suffolk adventurer, nothing



GRIMSTONE HALL, TRIMLEY.

[*To face p.* 22,

daunted by the failure of his first voyage, had no sooner set foot again in his native land than he commenced making preparations for more ambitious voyaging, having determined to follow the example of Drake and circumnavigate the globe. At his own expense he fitted out three ships, the *Desire*—which he had built for himself, and which was commanded by Master Thomas Fuller, of Ipswich—the *Content*, and the *Hugh Gallant*, their united tonnage being only 220 tons. Manning these ships with 123 men, some of whom had accompanied Drake round the world, he set sail on the 21st of July, 1586, "bent on invading the Spanish possessions in the South Seas."

From the account of Master James Pretty, of Eye, in Suffolk, who accompanied him, we learn that his cockleshell fleet was six months in reaching the Straits of Magellan, where Candish saw the ruins of the fever-ravaged town of San Felipe, which Pedro Sarmiento had founded about five years earlier. Like the earlier navigators of the Straits, Candish was amazed at the tallness of the Patagonians, and he found such vast numbers of penguins on Penguin Island, that he could have taken sufficient of them to provision his ships for the whole voyage. On leaving the Straits and entering the Pacific he was favoured with fair winds, and soon commenced despoiling the Spaniards Without the slightest compunction, he set about burning the town of Payta and plundering the island of Puna, at the latter place sinking a large ship, from which he first removed a valuable cargo. On nearing New Spain he captured another vessel, and made prisoner a pilot named Sanchez, from whom he learnt that a large Spanish ship, homeward bound from the Philip-

pines, was daily expected to arrive on the coast. At that time the *Content* seems to have lagged astern of his own ship, the *Desire;* but although the latter carried only sixty men, he determined to lay in wait for the expected treasure-ship. On her appearance she proved to be the *St. Anna,* the "admiral" of the South Seas, a vessel of 700 tons; but notwithstanding her superior size and fighting strength, he at once attacked her. Twice his men, when they attempted to board her, were beaten back; but at the third attempt they were successful, and captured her with a loss on the Englishmen's side of only two men killed and five wounded. How many Spaniards were slain we do not know, but 191 were made prisoners and put ashore, while seven were kept on board the *Desire* to act as pilots and interpreters. When the *St. Anna* was ransacked, she was found to contain 122,000 pesos of gold, in addition to a valuable cargo of merchandise. The division of the pesos led to much dispute among the Englishmen, and their voyage nearly came to a disastrous termination; but Candish succeeded in smoothing matters over and retaining the support of his crews.

From the American coast, after much successful buccaneering, he cruised onward to the Ladrones, crossing the Pacific to those islands in forty-five days—a truly remarkable performance, considering the composition of his little fleet and the time it had been at sea. From thence he sailed to the Philippines, which had already been colonised by the ubiquitous Spaniard, and while he was there he made such good use of his time and powers of observation as to acquire a good deal of valuable information respecting that extensive group of

islands. He also secured a map and description of China—a country of which he said that the "statelinesse and riches" were such that he feared to make a report on them, lest he should not be believed; for, he added, "if I had not known sufficiently the incomparable Wealth of that Countrey, I should have bene as incredulous thereof as others will be that have not had the like Experience." Borneo and the Moluccas were also visited. On reaching the Straits of Sunda, between Java and Sumatra, he stayed for a while to refit his ships and take in fresh provisions; he then sailed for the Cape of Good Hope, where he arrived after a nine-weeks' voyage. The rounding of the Cape was accomplished with little difficulty, and a few weeks later Candish was at St. Helena—an island well known to the Portuguese, but of which the English navigators had so little knowledge that our Suffolk adventurer probably sighted it by accident in the course of his homeward voyage. At any rate he said he "found out" the island, which was then covered with forest.

From St. Helena he returned home, arriving at Plymouth on the 9th of September, 1588, after an absence from England of two years and fifty days. He had sailed round the world in eight months' less time than Drake had taken to accomplish his great voyage, and financially his expedition had succeeded far beyond any hopes he is likely to have entertained. He had captured in all nineteen Spanish ships, and, as he proudly tells us, "all the Villages and Townes that ever I landed at I burnt and spoiled." He is said to have amassed wealth enough "to buy a fair earldom," and if he did not get one it was not

because he did not pay due homage to the queen; for on the day of his arrival at Plymouth, in concluding his too brief account of his adventures, he wrote: "All which Services with myself, I humbly prostrate at your Majesty's Feet; desiring the Almighty long to continue her reign among us. For at this Day she is the most famous and Victorious Prince that liveth in the World."

About three years later—on the 26th of August, 1591—Candish set out on another voyage, intending to revisit some of the countries in which he had already enriched himself. This time he was in command of five ships, one of which—his old vessel, the *Desire*—was commanded by John Davis, of Arctic fame. Violent storms for a long time prevented his entering the Pacific; his crews became mutinous; and even the captains of his ships refused to obey him. He succeeded in passing through the Straits of Magellan, but his ships lost sight of each other, and the fatigue of constant vigils, together with the strain of anxiety, brought on an illness that proved fatal. The lamentable issue of this expedition damped, we are told, the ardour of British maritime enterprise.

CHAPTER II

ORFORD

"Not far away we saw the port—
The strange, old-fashioned, silent town,—
The lighthouse,—the dismantled fort,—
The wooden houses, quaint and brown."

LONGFELLOW.

FROM Felixstowe the coast road runs north-eastward across the golf links to Bawdsey Haven, where the foot-farer or any vehicle from a bicycle to a coach-and-four can be conveyed across the Deben by a steam ferry. The neighbourhood of the ferry is one to loiter in for a while, if only to watch the barges making their way up the river to Woodbridge, and to chat with the fishermen and bargemen who may be found in or near the Ferry Inn. Moreover, the name of Newson, appearing over the door of the inn, reminds one that it was at Felixstowe Edward FitzGerald, to whom the Deben was the queen of rivers, discovered Thomas Newson, who became the skipper of his little schooner yacht the *Scandal*, and whose way of holding his head on one side always suggested to him "a magpie looking into a quart pot." It was a short voyage from Wood-

bridge down to Bawdsey, and FitzGerald, accompanied by Newson, who was "always smiling" though he was "the father of twins," often sailed down to the mouth of the river, sometimes making a further cruise along the coast, and once going as far as Holland. "My chief Amusement in Life," he wrote to one of his friends, "is Boating, on River or Sea." The country around Woodbridge had become unattractive to him because of the cutting down of trees and levelling of banks by "the petty race of Squires," who only used "the Earth for an Investment"; so, he says, "I get to the Water: where Friends are not buried nor pathways stopt up: but all is, as the Poets say, as Creation's Dawn beheld. I am happiest going in my little Boat round the Coast to Aldbro', with some Bottled Porter and some Bread and Cheese, and some good rough Soul who works the Boat and chews his Tobacco in peace." That was written about 1860, and more than twenty years afterwards, when, on the day before his death, he wrote his last letter, he mentioned, as one of the few amusements he could still take pleasure in, "a splash to Sea in one of the Boats." Then he had just taken his last stroll along the bank of the "dear old Deben"—that river which he often pictured to himself "with the worthy collier slope going forth into the wide world as the sun sinks." It is worth while to hire a boat and take a quiet sail up the Deben from Bawdsey if only to see the peaceful scenes FitzGerald loved: the riverside churches and hamlets, the tawny heathland with its prehistoric barrows, and the farmhouse at Sutton Haugh, where he often went to smoke a pipe with his farmer friend, Alfred Smith.

The "worthy collier sloop," or some small vessel not unlike it, still lazily ascends the slow-flowing Deben, and London barges creep up the tideway, carrying cargoes of timber, seed, and oilcake to Woodbridge; but there is nothing about the river suggestive of a highway of commerce. In the early part of the eighteenth century it may have been more remarkable for its shipping; for then, Defoe tells us, Woodbridge was the chief port for "shipping off" the famous Suffolk butter, for which reason that town was "full of corn factors and butter factors, some of whom were very considerable merchants." In earlier days the shores of the Deben were noted for the ship-building carried on there, and in the fifteenth century a good many vessels laden with corn set sail from Bawdsey Haven for Scotland and Iceland; but now the barges, a few fishing boats, and some yachts seem to be the only vessels which make use of the river, and as Woodbridge is the only town accessible by it, any revival of trading in water-borne goods is unlikely to occur. Nor are the queer dismantled Martello towers, which, like huge pork-pies, stud the coast on either side of the haven, likely to be regarrisoned in order that their guns may repel some foreign invader, for no ship of any size could now make its way up the shallow Deben. Excitement there was in the Armada year, when gallant seamen from Orford, Aldeburgh, Southwold, Lowestoft, and other ports along the coast helped to man the English ships which went out to meet the Spaniards; for on the 31st of July the *Vanguard*, attached to Lord Henry Seymour's fleet, whilst seeking the enemy's ships, came up "as high as Badsey (Bawdsey) Cliff," where her appearance,

no doubt, set dwellers by the Deben wondering if the Dons were about to descend upon the Suffolk shore.

Between Bawdsey Ferry and Aldeburgh lies the wildest tract of country along the Suffolk coast, and a traveller wishing to keep to the seashore must be content to travel on foot over sandy and shingly beaches and along the margin of lonesome salt marshes. To explore the long and dreary shingle bank extending from Aldeburgh to the mouth of the Ore, he must get a fisherman to row him across the river at Orford Haven, and then, unless he be a botanist in search of the rare sea pea or a bird-lover bent on visiting the tern colony on Orford beach, he will find little to reward him for the weariness of miles of toilsome walking and the risk of being benighted on a lonely shore. That this bare and lonesome part of the coast is not without interesting associations will be proved presently, when something is said about Orford; but the traveller journeying towards that ancient town is wise if he keep to the main road running through Alderton, Hollesley, and Butley. This journey of about 16 miles from Bawdsey and 18 from Felixstowe will afford him a pleasant day's ramble, or he may make it, during the holiday season, in an old-fashioned way by taking a seat on the coach which runs from Felixstowe to Orford and back every day.

The parish of Bawdsey extends some five miles from the ferry, and it may have been in a measure due to its size that the Bishop of Norwich, some sixty years ago, described it as "the most disgracefully neglected parish in his diocese." That something was lacking in the way of vicarial supervision is suggested by its church having been



ORFORD CASTLE.

[*To face p.* 30.

burned down in 1841 as a result of fireworks being discharged from its tower on "Guy Fawkes Day"; but since then, thanks to the efforts of a vicar who held the living nearly sixty years, matters have considerably improved. Its church has been rebuilt, save for the old tower, and that has a curiously "stumpy" appearance in consequence of about 30 feet of masonry having been removed from the top. The church of the adjoining village, Alderton, also has a partly ruined tower; but its Decorated nave has some good windows. Early in the seventeenth century Giles Fletcher, whose "Christ's Victory and Triumph" has something of the rich and philosophical tone of Spencer, was rector of Alderton. He was a brother of Phineas Fletcher, whose remarkable Purple Island contains a minute and elaborate account of the body and mind of man; and he was a cousin of the more famous John Fletcher, the dramatist. Hallam, in a discriminating criticism of the work of the brothers Fletcher, says of Giles that he sometimes ventured to cope with Spencer, "even in celebrated passages such as the description of the Cave of Despair"; but "he had the honour of being followed by Milton, especially in the first meeting of our Saviour with Satan in the 'Paradise Regained.'"

Hollesley, a large parish lying between Alderton and Boyton, gives its name to the large but not very definitely bounded bay which receives the waters of the Ore. Sheltered by Orford Ness and a sand-bank called the Whiting Bank, the bay afforded safe anchorage to ships in the days when the coasting trade was carried on by means of sailing vessels, and English fleets have on more than one occasion ridden in its safe roadstead.

Edward FitzGerald, in writing to Bernard Barton, said that from the road in front of Bredfield Hall, near Woodbridge, people used plainly to see the topmasts of the men-of-war lying in Hollesley Bay, and in his poem, "Bredfield Hall," he wrote of how that fine old house in which he was born—

> "Lifts its honest gables
> Towards the distant German Seas;
>
> Where it once discerned the smoke
> Of old sea battles far away:
> Saw victorious Nelson's topmasts
> Anchoring in Hollesley Bay."

Alderton, Hollesley, Sudborne, and several other parishes in this neighbourhood are famous for their Crag pits, excavated in richly fossiliferous deposits which were sand-banks at a time when the North Sea extended over a considerable portion of what is now East Suffolk. The fossils obtained from these interesting pits are chiefly shells, many hundred species of which have been found in one pit alone; but in the Coralline Crag, which is well exposed in several places inland of Orford, species of reef-building polyzoa—which were at first considered to be corals, and so gained for the Crag its name of Coralline—may be obtained. At Bawdsey, as at Felixstowe, the cliffs are mainly composed of Red Crag, and in almost every parish along the road to Orford there are pits in which a typical collection of Red Crag fossils can soon be made. Many of these pits were originally excavated for the purpose of obtaining those phosphatic nodules known as coprolites, which occur at the base of the Crag and were formerly largely used for the improvement of arable land. The late Professor

J. S. Henslow first recognised their value for this purpose, and for many years coprolite-digging found employment for a considerable number of men; but of late years the use of them has been almost, if not entirely, abandoned. The deposit from which they are obtained has also produced some remarkable mammalian fossils, including bones of the mastodon, southern elephant, bear, tapir, and rhinoceros; but these are believed to be "derived" fossils, brought by sea currents or beach movement from deposits of the Older Pliocene or the Miocene period.

Travellers interested in geology will therefore find much to occupy their attention if they choose to loiter on the road from Bawdsey to Orford, while archæologists who are disappointed with the churches at Bawdsey, Alderton, and Hollesley will find at Butley one of the most interesting buildings in this part of Suffolk. This is the vicarage, mainly an eighteenth-century house, in which is embodied the fine gatehouse of an Augustinian priory founded in 1171 by Ralph de Glanvile, who was also the founder of a neighbouring abbey, at Leiston. The gatehouse, built early in the fourteenth century, is a flint and stone structure, having its façade adorned with thirty-five shields of arms arranged in five rows, each containing seven shields. Between each shield is a square stone carved with a fleur-de-lis, while above is a window and niche. Originally there was a tower on each side of the entrance, but these have been lowered to the level of the eaves of the house, while an arched recess at the base of each has been built up. On the north side of the gatehouse are some good niches; also two well-designed bricked-up windows of later date. Within, some plain

vaulting and a fireplace made of a portion of the sedilia of the priory church are the most noteworthy features. Among the arms represented on the shields are those of Germany, France, England, and St. Edmund of East Anglia, which will be found in the top row; while those of the founder of the priory occupy the central position in the bottom row. Among the distinguished men who were buried in the priory church at Butley was Michael de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, who fell at Agincourt. A tombstone near the tower of Hollesley Church is said to be that of William de Geyton, who was prior of Butley from 1311 to 1321. Henry Howard, the poet Earl of Surrey, when a lad of twelve years old, was brought here by his father, who was desirous of selling to the prior Staverton Park, a fine old tract of oak forest still to be seen between Butley and Woodbridge. At the time of the suppression of the priory its annual income was about £318.

A small stream, called the Butley River, flows into the Ore between Butley and Gedgrave. Near the junction of the two rivers is a curious eminence, isolated on the border of the marshes and known as Burrow or Barrow Hill. This hill, which has been described as a prehistoric burial-ground, is worth visiting for the sake of the view from its summit; but antiquaries may find a greater interest in trying to solve its mystery. For the farmer who hires the land relates how, when gravel is excavated from a pit near the top of the hill, heaps of human bones are frequently unearthed, all mixed up together, as though the bodies of the slain in some forgotten battle were hastily interred together. The presence of numerous bones of domesticated animals, with

the discovery of a large patch of oyster-shells—evidently a "kitchen-midden"—suggests that the hill is the site of an ancient settlement. In support of the battle theory, however, it may be mentioned that Lord Frances Hervey, in an interesting note in his edition of Reyce's "Suffolk Breviary," tries to identify Hollesley, which is only a short distance from Burrow Hill, with Haegelisdun, where the army of King Edmund was defeated and the king himself done to death by the Danes. Dennis Piramus distinctly states that the Danes landed at Orford, and that, after sacking the town, they marched to Haegelisdun, where the decisive battle was fought, which is therefore more likely to have been Hollesley, only a few miles from Orford, than Hoxne, which is many miles away, but which later chroniclers than Dennis Piramus have identified with the place of Edmund's martyrdom.

Compactly built on sloping ground bordering the marshlands of the Ore, the little town of Orford, almost as unknown to Suffolk folk as to dwellers in other counties, has been the "Sleepy Hollow" of the Suffolk coast for many generations, and it seems destined to remain isolated for many years to come. Remote from the railway; cut off from Felixstowe by the unbridged estuary of the Deben, from Aldeburgh by that of the Alde, and from its own lonely beach by the tidal waters of its own river, it drowses away its days in the dull way to which it has long grown accustomed, and it never looks for a real awakening. Traditions of stirring times—of raiding Northmen sacking a Saxon "Orefort," of brutal Norman barons holding the grim castle and devastating the country for miles around, and of a river thronged with merchant shipping—are recounted now and again

in a hesitating way, as though no one could be expected to believe them; for even the tellers of these ancient legends must have doubts about them when they hear how a footfall is echoed in the silent street, and when their eyes rest upon the empty river and desolate shore. Dennis Piramus writes of Orford as being "a great city of antiquity," and Defoe says that it was "once a good town"; but Piramus was a poet and Defoe a teller of romantic tales. What they say about Orford's past may be true; but——

Whatever Orford may or may not have been, it is unquestionably a town well worth visiting, not only on account of its castle and its fine old church, but also because there is always something interesting in the very existence of an ancient seaside town that has neither been visited by many holiday-making folk nor tried to attract them. A few people of quiet tastes have discovered it, and it has for them a charm and an interest which a popular coast town cannot possess; but the average person who yearly stays for a while at some lively watering-place will find Orford "dull to distraction." For the antiquary and botanist, the geologist, the angler and the wild-fowler, however, it has plenty of entertainment, and in the "Crown and Castle" it has an excellent inn, where no one can complain of lack of comfort and attention. With such head-quarters, a visitor may spend several days in exploring the town and its neighbourhood without entirely exhausting their interest.

The castle, for which the town is chiefly noted, stands on a partly artificial mound within an inner fosse and the remains of an outer one. It now consists of a polygonal keep, flanked by three

square towers; but from old prints and drawings it appears that a high battlemented wall formerly surrounded the keep, the approach being on the south-west side. The walls are remarkably massive—at the base some 20 feet in thickness; but the entrance has been disfigured by the construction of a styleless doorway in the place of the original Norman one. Within there are many small chambers in the thickness of the walls, but interest chiefly attaches to the chapel, which has the ruins of its original altar; the seneschal's dormitory, and a large room on the third floor. This last-named room, which formerly had a vaulted roof, has a modern floor; but there are no floors to the main rooms below it. Beneath the chapel is a dark dungeon—a grim reminder of the fact, which Mr. V. B. Redstone has brought to light, that in the reign of Edward I., William of Butley was scourged to death within the castle dungeon, and his body was buried secretly at sea in order that an inquest might be avoided. Like every other building of its kind, the castle has a well. Despite its ruined state, Orford Castle can still afford any one who examines it closely a very fair idea of the plan, accommodation, and conveniences of a Norman stronghold. The view from the top of it is a fine one. Northward, Aldeburgh and its Martello tower are plainly visible beyond the distant Alde; southward, there is an outlook, on a clear day, as far as Walton-on-the-Naze, in Essex; inland, Butley Church and the ancient oak forest, Staverton Park, can be seen; while seaward, Havergate Island lies in one direction and the lonely lighthouse on the Ness in another.

It appears from the Pipe Rolls, which have been examined by Mr. Redstone, that the castle was

built, either by the direct orders of Henry II. or by his Justiciar, Richard de Lucy, about 1165. At that time an invasion of England by a force of Flemish mercenaries was anticipated, and the erection of a castle near the mouth of the Ore served the double purpose of providing a safeguard for the river and a stronghold from which the custodian could keep watch on Framlingham and Walton Castles, both then held by the rebel Earl Bigod. When news arrived that the Flemings were approaching the coast, the castle was garrisoned by twenty soldiers, who managed to hold it against the foreign marauders; but the town was captured by some of Hugh Bigod's men. Bartholomew de Glanvile, a brother of the founder of Butley priory, was then custodian of the castle, and it appears that for a time he was also the custodian of a curious creature known as the "wild man of Orford." According to Ralph, a monk of Coggeshall, this monster was captured one day in a fisherman's net. In size and shape it resembled a man; it had a long bristly beard; its body was covered with hair; but the crown of its head was hairless. It was taken to the castle, where the servants of the seneschal gave it food but tormented it cruelly in trying to make it speak. One day it was taken to Orford Church; but it paid no heed to any of the rites and ceremonies, nor would it adore the Host. Occasionally it was allowed to swim in the sea, but one day it broke through a triple barrier of nets and escaped. Nothing was seen of it for some time, but, strange to say, it eventually returned of its own accord to the scene of its ill-treatment and captivity. There it remained until, we are told, it became weary of

living alone, stole away to the sea, and was never heard of again. This curious story probably had its origin in the keeping of a pet seal at the castle, but some writers have been unkind enough to suggest that the "monster" was a captive priest. There is still a tradition that the "wild man of Orford" occasionally makes an appearance in lonely parts of the coast.

In later years the castle had several notable custodians, among them being John de Grey, Bishop of Norwich; Hubert de Burgh, the Hubert of Shakespeare's "King John"; and Michael de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk. When the barons sought the aid of the French in their struggle with King John, Orford, with other Norfolk and Suffolk castles, was held by Louis, the French Dauphin. Hugh de Dyneneton, or Dennington, who was custodian from 1272 to 1276, lived here the life of a robber-baron, his soldiers, allied with criminals, committing great depredations in the country around Orford. It was during his term of office that William of Butley was scourged to death in the castle, a certain William Haldane also being murdered there. Dyneneton seems to have been the only desperado among the seneschals of Orford, and since the seventeenth century the title of Earl of Orford has been borne by some distinguished men. The first bearer of that title was Admiral Russell, who defeated the French fleet off La Hogue. At his death it became extinct; but it was revived again in the person of Sir Robert Walpole, the great Prime Minister.

Orford Castle now stands in the outskirts of the town. Centuries ago, before a sand-bar blocked up the haven, and prevented large vessels from coming up to the quays, Orford was a much larger

place, with houses and streets on the west and south sides of the castle, where there are now fields —fields which, in some instances, retain the names of the vanished streets. In those days the town was a borough, and until 1832 it sent two members to Parliament. As a "pocket borough" it supplied a seat to the famous Lord Castlereagh. Its Corporation was left untouched by the Municipal Reform Act of 1835, but in 1886 it was done away with—a fact much lamented by many of the townsfolk when they look at their handsome regalia and the rate-collector's demand notes. With many other buildings, a religious house founded for the hermit friars of St. Augustine has entirely disappeared; gone, too, are the chapels of St. John the Baptist and St. Leonard and the hospital of St. Leonard. Here and there some fragments of these and other old establishments are embedded in walls of later date, but in most instances even the sites of the buildings are unknown. The tower of the present church, which was originally a Norman building, contemporary in date with the castle, is partly in ruins, and the ruins of a Norman chancel still adjoin the east end of the church. These ruins are very picturesque and interesting. They consist of five large Norman arches, divided by massive piers of different designs and ornamentation, some being composed of clusters of shafts, while others are larger and surrounded by the remains of projecting spiral bands. The rest of the church is mainly of the Decorated period; but recent restoration has revealed some Norman arches at the east end of the north aisle, and the porch and font date from the earlier half of the sixteenth century. The west and south doorways are noteworthy, as



ORFORD CHURCH.

[*To face p.* 40.

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also are several of the brasses, the oldest being that of a civilian in tunic with rosary, dating from about 1480. The church is rich in old brasses, some of which, as Mr. Redstone has remarked, "are of special interest as giving accurate delineations of the costumes worn by mayors, burgesses, and civilians at different periods from 1480 to 1640." There are some good bells, but these, owing to the state of the tower, are placed at the west end of the south aisle, where there is also a fine oak chest. Apart from the brasses, the only memorial calling for particular notice is a mural tablet with kneeling figure of Francis Mason, who was rector from 1599 to 1621. He was chaplain to James I., and a voluminous writer in defence of the Church. His monument was originally in the ruined chancel, from which it was removed in 1720.

Turning from the remains of ancient Orford and the memorials of its long-departed inhabitants, and going down to the primitive quay by the riverside, is like emerging from a dim, damp cloister into the fresh air and bright light of day. A brisk breeze comes up the river, a wavering haze veils the distant Ness, the white wings of the terns gleam in the sunlight as they wheel over the beach, while over the marshes the restless redshanks are flying, piping plaintively. A mile or so away the waves are breaking on the shore; but between the quay and the sea lie the river and that remarkable shingle bank, ten miles long, which goes by the name of Orford Beach. Centuries ago—how many no one can tell—there was no such bank, and the river Alde, which below Aldeburgh is called the Ore, found its way into the sea somewhere in the neighbourhood of Thorpe; but as the Dunwich

cliffs, which largely consisted of pebbly beds, were slowly destroyed by the sea, a pebbly beach was formed, which gradually extended southward until it turned the river in that direction. Year after year, century after century, the cliffs kept falling and the bank kept lengthening, until it reached Orford, where, had its progress been stayed, a flourishing seaport would now exist; but nothing could stay this wonderful phenomenon of land-making on a coast that everywhere else was being wasted by the sea. For years Orford was a thriving port, having the entrance to its harbour at the north end of what is now Havergate Island; but as time went on, and the strange beach movement continued, the waters of the Ore had to flow further and further before they could enter the sea. At the same time the shingle bank, to whose millions upon millions of pebbles others were constantly being added, was widening in front of the town until a prominent point, or ness, was formed, on which, in course of time, a beacon, and afterwards a lighthouse, had to be set up for the guidance of seamen approaching this dangerous part of the coast. Then a tract of low-lying ground, between 200 and 300 acres in extent, became cut off from the mainland by the river forcing its way round it, and so Havergate Island, the loneliest inhabited spot in the Eastern counties, came into existence. Some time later the little Butley River began to mingle its waters with those of the Ore before the latter found their way to the sea; and so this curious alteration of the coast and of the course of an ancient river went on until the mouth of the Alde or Ore had been removed from Thorpe on the north of Aldeburgh to a point opposite the parish of Hollesley, some 12 miles

further southward, near the middle of the shore curve of Hollesley Bay.

The long tongue of shingle, perhaps the most remarkable natural feature of the East Anglian coast, has never been a sufficiently attractive place to tempt people to go and live on it, and between sea-wasted Slaughden and the mouth of Orford Haven it is uninhabited save by the keepers of the lighthouse on Orford Ness. It is known to botanists as one of the few localities where the rare sea pea (*Lathyrus maritimus*), which grows in the shingle, can be found. Concerning this scarce plant, an old writer says: "We learn from the epistles of the learned Caius that the sea pea was first discovered in the year 1555, when, in a great scarcity, the poor people on the coast of Suffolk, about Orford and Aldeburgh, supported themselves with it for some time. This story is related by Stow and Camden, with the addition that they were supposed to spring up opportunely in that year of dearth from a shipwrecked vessel loaded with peas; whereas the sea pea differs from all the varieties of the garden or field pea in the length and continuance of the roots, the smallness and bitterness of its seed, and in the whole habit and appearance of the plant. It had probably grown a long time on Orford beach unobserved, until extreme want called it into public notice. The seed is so bitter that it could not be eaten, except in a want of better food, and it is certainly not used at present, though it might be gathered in sufficient quantity; nay, it is neglected by the very birds. The legend of the miraculous arrival of these peas in a time of extreme scarcity is still believed among the country people."

As a resort of sea birds, the shingle bank is chiefly interesting on account of its colony of

terns. These graceful sea swallows can hardly be said to make nests, for they lay their eggs in saucer-shaped hollows in the shingle, occasionally lining or decorating them with some broken shells or a piece of seaweed. Without these beautiful birds, which chiefly nest between Orford Ness and the southern end of the bank, the beach would be a dreary place indeed; yet if the Aldeburgh and Orford fishermen had had their way some three years ago, the protection extended to the terns under the Wild Birds Protection Act would have been done away with. The fishermen finding, in the summer of 1906, that smelts were far less plentiful in the river than they wished them to be, laid the blame on the terns, which, they said, had consumed such quantities as to make smelt-netting an unprofitable industry. The fact that when terns were more plentiful on Orford beach smelts were also far more abundant was ignored by the fishermen, and there was more than a suspicion that the agitation against the terns had its origin in a knowledge that the birds were much in demand among milliners, while their eggs could always find a ready sale as "plovers' eggs." Fortunately, the local naturalists got up a counter-agitation on behalf of the abused birds, with the result that the would-be tern-shooters and egg-collectors were not allowed to indulge themselves in the congenial occupation of driving the birds away from the Suffolk coast.

The river islet of Havergate had a population of twelve persons some sixty years ago, but since then even fewer people have dwelt upon it, and sometimes it has been uninhabited. It has generally been used as a grazing ground for sheep, and more than once, when a high tide has submerged it, whole flocks have been drowned.

There is a tradition that Margaret Catchpole, after her escape from Ipswich Gaol, went into hiding, with her lover Will Laud, on Havergate Island; but according to the Rev. R. Cobbold she passed the night in a cottage at Sudborne, a parish adjoining Orford. The following morning she crossed the river to the shingle bank, on the sea side of which she was awaiting the arrival of the smugglers' boat when the Ipswich gaoler and the Melton constable came and took her again into custody. The author of the novel states that immediately after her escape from gaol a handbill was circulated, offering £50 reward for her re-capture, and describing her as being a "tall and dark person, with short hair, black eyes, and of intelligent countenance"; but at the Jolly Sailor Inn at Orford one of the real handbills is still preserved. It reads:—

March 26th, 1800

ESCAPED

From the County Gaol, Ipswich, last night, or early this morning,

MARGARET CATCHPOLE

a convict,
under sentence of transportation for felony and horse-stealing.

She is about 38 years of age, swarthy complexion, very dark eyes and hair, hard favoured, about 5 feet 2 inches high, and escaped in a convict's dress which she has probably changed, and may be disguised in men's apparel.

20£ REWARD

Printed by John Bush, Circulating Library, Tavern Street.

An Orford man is said to have given information as to Margaret's whereabouts, and to have claimed the reward.

CHAPTER III

ALDEBURGH

"We went up the beach, by the sandy down
Where the sea-stocks bloom, to the white-wall'd town,"
. . . .
To the little grey church on the windy hill."

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

THE shortest road from Orford to Aldeburgh is a rough one and comes to an abrupt termination before the Alde is reached, the only way down to the ferry being a narrow footpath through fields and saltings. The road runs through a sparsely populated part of the parish of Sudborne, and Sudborne Church, a small Decorated building with earlier and later portions, standing a little way down a byroad, is the only object of interest between the two coast towns. Indeed, so dreary and uninteresting is the road that a sail up the river or a ramble along the river wall is much to be preferred as a way of reaching Aldeburgh and of obtaining a good idea of the wildness and primitiveness of this part of the coast. Only cyclists and travellers on foot can make the journey by the road running nearest to the river, for there is no cart ferry at Aldeburgh. Travellers



SLAUGHDEN QUAY.

[*To face p.* 46.

driving or motoring must go round the upper part of the Alde estuary, and cross the river at Snape.

Approached from the south, Aldeburgh hardly suggests a popular seaside town, owing to the road from the boat ferry passing through the detached hamlet of Slaughden, a small, dilapidated sea-threatened cluster of cottages bordering a primitive quay and grouped around an ancient inn with a huge bone of a whale suspended over its front door. This quaint, picturesque fishermen's colony occupies a narrow strip, some 100 yards wide, of the Aldeburgh and Orford shingle bank; some ruined houses, half-embedded in the shingle, speak for themselves of the havoc wrought by the sea. On the river near by a few fishing-boats ride at anchor or, when the tide is out, rest slantwise on the ooze; on the bank, old hulks are drawn up, one or two of them converted into ark-like dwellings in which fishermen live. Almost unaltered this stagnant Slaughden must be since George Crabbe worked here as a quay labourer and then sailed away from it, on board the lugger *Unity*, to seek fame and fortune in London. His description of it is as true to-day as when it was written.

> "Here samphire banks and saltwort bound the flood,
> There stakes and seaweed withering on the mud;
> And higher up a ridge of all things base,
> Which some strong tide has roll'd upon the place."

"The melancholy of Slaughden last night, with the same sloops sticking sidelong in the mud as sixty years ago!" wrote Edward FitzGerald during one of his frequent visits to Aldeburgh. Melancholy is the appearance of the old Martello tower, too, which, a short distance to the south

of Slaughden, stands isolated between the river and the sea.

Unlike Orford and Slaughden, Aldeburgh has advanced with the times. The railway has extended a tentacular branch line to it from Saxmundham; hotels, boarding-houses, and villas have sprung up on either side of its ancient Moot Hall; a pleasant promenade extends along the sea-front where formerly stood the pebble-built cottages of the fishermen; bathing machines and bathing tents are dotted along the pebbly beach, and evidences of the growing popularity of the little town can be seen on every hand. The older portion of it lies almost on a level with the beach; but inland, where the church and some of the larger houses are built, there is higher ground, affording a fine sea view and a wide outlook across the Alde valley. Northward, a hedgeless road, bordered on its landward side by plover-haunted salt marshes, runs parallel with the beach to Thorpe, a small fishing village clearly seen from the promenade. A good deal of the country lying to the north and inland of the town consists of water-logged marsh and open heathland. Though sometimes described as "dreary," it is not without its charm, especially for admirers of the writings of Crabbe, who find pleasure in noting how faithfully he has depicted the scenery around his native town.

Not long ago it was announced in the newspapers that the wild tract of marsh extending from Aldeburgh to Thorpe was to be reclaimed for building purposes. The news was probably good news to the inhabitants of the town, who are naturally desirous of seeing it grow and prosper; but to lovers of Nature it was not

so pleasing. Whether the scheme can be carried out successfully remains to be proved; but should the work be accomplished, ramblers along the Crag Path are unlikely to find as much pleasure in seeing new villas and boarding-houses springing up beside it as in watching the redshank and the lapwing wheeling over the marsh pools, in seeing the sea aster fringing the sea-scattered shingle, and in listening to the whistle of the ringed plover as it flits from shore to marsh and from marsh to shore. The precise nature of the fascination of a tract of salt marsh is not easily explained. Of George Borrow it has been said that "he could draw more poetry from a wide-spreading marsh with its straggling rushes than from the most beautiful scenery," and when he settled down to a country life it was in a cottage on the border of the marshes; but among his rhapsodies on East Anglia there is scarcely a word about the wide monotonous levels with which he was so familiar. Thoreau is eloquent of the spell cast upon him by the Concord River and its mysterious barges, but when he tries to give expression to the enchantment of the marshlands he can only see them vaguely through the mist of the fen. Probably, the subtle appeal of the marsh to the primitive instincts of the "child of the open air" is the secret of the spell, which the master of words finds almost as hard to explain as would the lonely fisherman of a marsh lagoon or the humble wild-fowler who has his home in an ark-like houseboat in some marshland creek. The

> "Low belts of rushes, ragged with the blast,
> Lagoons of marish, reddening with the west;
> And o'er the marsh, the waterfowl's unrest,
> While daylight dwindles and the dusk falls fast,"

combine to give to such scenery that primeval aspect with which the prehistoric lake-dweller was familiar, and to which, perhaps, some aboriginal instinct in modern man responds when he finds himself alone amid the marshes. Or it may be that the true explanation is, as Mr. Hardy suggests, that "the time seems near, if it has not already arrived, when the chastened sublimity of a moor, a sea, or a mountain will be all of Nature that is absolutely in keeping with the moods of the more thinking among mankind."

In regard to the Aldeburgh marshland, it would be useless to urge against its reclamation its appeal to man in his more sombre or more thoughtful moods; but seeing that the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments has secured possession of a portion of Wicken Fen in order that one small tract of the Fen Country may retain its primitive aspect, one may ask if some way might not be found of preserving Aldeburgh's wild salt marsh, if only as a memorial of George Crabbe. That poet was well described by Lord Byron as "Nature's sternest poet and her best." In depicting the wild and sterile surroundings of his native town he gave to us some impressive pen-pictures of natural scenery. Every feature of the coast from Orford to Dunwich is, as the poet's son and biographer states, reproduced somewhere or other in his writings, and whether he is describing the gleaming ooze flats of the Alde, the arid dunes with their scanty flora, or the barren heath, he is minute and accurate in his details. When he treats of the fens and marshes in which he botanised in the days when he was earning a

precarious livelihood as a doctor-apothecary, he does not fail to note the

> "Blossoms rare, and curious rush,
> The gale's rich balm, and sundew's crimson blush,
> Whose velvet leaf with radiant beauty dress'd,
> Forms a gay pillow for the plover's breast."

Many were the days Crabbe spent in wandering amid the Aldeburgh marshes, where, like his Peter Grimes the fisherman he would

> "Sadly listen to the tuneless cry
> Of fishing gull or clanging golden-eye;
> What time the sea-birds to the marsh would come,
> And the loud bittern, from the bull-rush home,
> Gave from the salt ditch side the bellowing boom."

The bittern long ago ceased to nest in the Aldeburgh marshes, and with the marshes the green plover and the redshank would probably disappear from the immediate neighbourhood of the town.

Among the things which may prevent the reclamation of the marshes, a possible incursion of the sea must be reckoned; for only a narrow strip of beach divides the saltings from the sea. Several inundations have been experienced since the reign of Queen Elizabeth, when the town was in so flourishing a state that it sent out eight hundred men to the herring fishery and three hundred more were engaged in the taking of sprats. Towards the end of the sixteenth century the sea began to encroach so much upon the land that protective jetties had to be constructed; but these did not prevent the wasting of the beach, Some sixty or seventy years later a whole street, which ran parallel with the present sea-front, was washed

away; in 1767 further havoc was wrought; and in 1779 eleven houses disappeared in one day, among them being that in which George Crabbe was born. His son, in writing of the town as it was when his father was a boy, describes it as "a poor and wretched place, with nothing of the elegance and gaiety which have since sprung up about it. . . . It consisted of two parallel and unpaved streets, running between mean and scrambling houses, the abodes of seafaring men, pilots, and fishers. The range of houses nearest to the sea had suffered so much from repeated invasions of the waves, that only a few scattered tenements appeared erect among the desolation. I have often heard my father describe a tremendous spring tide of, I think, the 1st of January, 1779, when eleven houses here were at once demolished; and he saw the breakers dash over the roofs, curl round the walls, and crush all to ruins. The beach consists of successive ridges—large rolled stones, then loose shingle, and, at the fall of the tide, a strip of fine hard sand. Vessels of all sorts, from the large heavy troll-boat to the yawl and prame, drawn up along the shore—fishermen preparing their tackle, or sorting their spoil—and nearer the gloomy old town hall (the only indication of municipal dignity) a few groups of mariners, chiefly pilots, taking their quick short walk backwards and forwards, every eye watchful of a signal from the offing—such was the squalid scene that first opened on the author of 'The Village.'" Since this was written, Aldeburgh has suffered less frequently from sea encroachment, but Slaughden has at times been almost destroyed by the waves.

The "gloomy old town hall" referred to by the second George Crabbe is the Moot Hall, the only



ALDEBURGH FROM THE SEA.

[*To face p.* 52.

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architecturally interesting building in the town. It dates, in all probability, from the sixteenth century, and the restoration it has undergone has been carried out with such good taste that it has not been robbed of its appearance of antiquity. It occupies a somewhat isolated position, almost on the beach; but an old town map, which is—or was—preserved in a stone safe in the hall, shows that it was once in the centre of the town. This Moot Hall is in some respects more interesting than the church, a fifteenth-century building, chiefly remarkable for its width in proportion to its length. Most of the visitors to Aldeburgh, however, enter the church to see the bust of Crabbe, a replica of the Westminster Abbey memorial to the late Rt. Hon. H. Fawcett (who spent much of his time in the town), and a tablet to the memory of seven local lifeboatmen who were drowned by the capsizing of their boat on the 7th of December, 1899.

Mentioning the sad disaster to the Aldeburgh lifeboat reminds me that, some years ago, when the Royal National Lifeboat Institution was conducting a series of lifeboat tests at Lowestoft, I had a chat with James Cable, for many years coxswain of the Aldeburgh boat. He comes of a family famous for the deeds of life-saving performed by some of its members, and both his father and his grandfather were drowned whilst gallantly attempting to rescue shipwrecked seamen, his father losing his life whilst swimming through the surf to carry a rope to a brig that drove ashore on Orford Ness. James Cable himself, when only eighteen years old, saved the life of a ship's apprentice who fell overboard from a vessel lying off Penang; but his chief exploits in

life-saving have been performed off the Aldeburgh coast. There it was that, on a stormy November day, he saw the Norwegian barque *Winifred*, which had dragged her anchor whilst riding in the Swin, go aground on Bawdsey Bank. It seemed every moment that she must capsize, but the crew cut away the main- and mizzen-masts, and she then floated off the shoal and came running down towards Aldeburgh with her flag flying in the foremast rigging and only her foretop staysail set. Off Aldeburgh she again grounded, and Cable at once went out with the lifeboat to save her crew. On drawing near her he found it impossible to approach her on the lee side owing to the heavy seas; so he lowered the lifeboat's anchor and brought her down to windward of the ship. The barque, however, kept "knocking" away from the boat, and he had to haul up his anchor and set sail again. Even then the ship's foremast had to be cut away before the lifeboat could get alongside; but eventually the crew crawled out on to the jibboom, from which they lowered themselves into the boat. The last man to leave the ship was the pilot, who got out on to the boom and had to come down the jibstay. Once he slipped and nearly fell into the sea; and when he was seized by the lifeboatmen his boot, by which they had caught hold of him, came off. He was then grasped by the leg and dragged into safety. A few minutes later both the jibboom and the bowsprit fell into the sea, and in a short time the barque became a total wreck. For his share in this gallant rescue Cable received the silver medal of the Lifeboat Institution.

On another occasion, when the wind, after blowing a heavy gale from the south, suddenly shifted

round to the west, the Welsh schooner *Rambler* grounded off Aldeburgh. A rocket-line was fired by the coastguard, but the crew of the schooner were unable to haul the whip on board, so the lifeboat was launched. Before it could reach the vessel, one of the crew fell from the rigging and was drowned; but when it drew alongside another man managed to leap into it. The waves then carried it away from the schooner's side, and, despite all his efforts, Cable could not bring it near again. At length a rope was thrown to the wreck, and to this the remainder of the crew made themselves fast. They then leapt into the sea and were hauled into the boat. This had hardly been done when the lifeboat itself got aground and was in imminent danger of being capsized; but the waves carried it off the shoal and Cable with the shipwrecked crew safely reached the shore. They had scarcely landed when they saw the schooner go all to pieces. Many similar tales might be told, each of which has Cable of Aldeburgh for its hero. One might relate how the German steamer *Sirius* and the Norwegian barque *Prudentia* were lost in the same week in November, 1888, and twenty-five men were safely landed by the Aldeburgh boat; how the barques *Baltic* and *Rock City* were wrecked without a life being lost; and how several ships, after their crews had given themselves up for lost, were taken charge of by the gallant Aldeburgh coxswain and steered safely into Harwich Harbour. Once, during a fierce easterly gale, he, with his lifeboatmen, were afloat one hundred hours, during which the crews of three ships were saved from death. To-day, he not only has two silver clasps attached to his silver medal, but he can also show you the bronze medal of the

Royal Humane Society, another presented to him by the King of Sweden, and a gold watch awarded him by the German Emperor. Well may it be said of him that he is "a Cable that in storm ne'er broke!"

"There is no sea like the Aldeburgh sea; it talks to me," said Edward FitzGerald; but the tale it tells is often a sad one, and none is sadder than that of the death of the seven lifeboatmen upon whom their lifeboat overturned when, ready as ever to risk their lives to save those of drowning seamen, they were launching from the beach.

Although Aldeburgh has little likeness to the "Borough" described by Crabbe, the country around it is much the same as it was in his day. North-westward of the town are heathlands and old commons, on some of which are several barrows; on Snape Common the remains of a ship-burial—probably that of some viking Northman—were discovered some years ago. Leiston, about 4 miles from Aldeburgh, is famous for its ruins of a Premonstratensian abbey, founded by Ralph de Glanville; Framlingham Castle, a stronghold of the Bigods, Uffords, Mowbrays, and Howards, and the rallying-point of the East Anglian Roman Catholics when Princess Mary came there before she ascended the throne, can easily be visited by rail. Near the eastern bank of the Alde, at a spot called Barber's Point, relics of a small Roman settlement have lately been brought to light. They include Samian ware, a bronze ring, a pendant-shaped locket, a mortaria, and fragments of culinary vessels and cinerary urns. Curiously enough, the late Dr. N. Hele, some years ago, gave the following description

of the spot where these relics were found: "Near the eastern bank or wall, bounding the river, about three miles from Aldeburgh, near Hazelwood, is a remarkably shaped piece of land, higher than the surrounding marshes. . . . It is quadrilateral in shape and extends to the eastward towards the marshes. The face presented towards the river has from time to time been encroached upon by high tides, and presents an abrupt surface in which oyster-shells are abundant, as also a dark soil. The general appearance is artificial, and from these and other shells, teeth, and tusks, as well as charcoal and fragments of pottery, it is probable that this must have been originally a small Roman station, the situation commanding a view of the river, north and south." Since the recent discoveries have been made, it has been ascertained that from time immemorial the site has been known to the inhabitants of Hazelwood as "Roman Island."

In taking leave of Aldeburgh, it must not be forgotten that it is the place where "Kitchel cakes" are made. They are baked only on New Year's Eve, and must be eaten before midnight. Formerly, the worst of ill-luck was predicted for folk who failed to partake of these cakes, and even now, it is said, there is no one in the town so daring as to nibble a crumb of one of them after the New Year has dawned.

CHAPTER IV

ALDEBURGH TO DUNWICH

"Yet more, the depths have more!—Thy waves have rolled
Above the cities of a world gone by!
Sand hath filled up the palaces of old,
Seaweed o'ergrown the halls of revelry."

MRS. HEMANS.

NOT long ago, on an autumn day when the swallows were flocking for migration and the goldfinches were flying from one seeding thistle to another in the saltings, I set out to walk from Aldeburgh to Dunwich. Disregarding the advice of an ancient mariner, who for a fisherman revealed a surprising acquaintance with the highways and byways of East Suffolk, I determined to keep as nearly as possible to the coast-line, telling myself that by choosing a route that "folks never take if they can help it" I was the more likely to acquaint myself with an unfamiliar aspect of Suffolk coast life. My map told me that my way lay round Thorpe Haven and by Sizewell Gap, and a dotted line, which the cartographer had apparently inserted with some hesitancy, indicated that a pathway of some kind lay along or near the shore. Here, I told myself, was an unknown land to be explored.



RUINS OF ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, DUNWICH.

[*To face p.* 58.

I had not gone far before I knew that the maker of that map had never trodden the road I was travelling. Along the Aldeburgh Crag Path I noticed nothing to shake my confidence in him, but when I drew near Thorpe grave doubts arose in my mind. For opposite Thorpe and extending beyond the three-fathom line of depth at sea, was written the word "haven," yet look where I would no haven could I see. Again and again I turned to that map, wondering if my eyes had deceived me; but no! not only was "haven" clearly printed there, but the coast-line was made to curve inland and form, to all appearance, as snug a little mile-long harbour as a storm-tossed seaman could desire. I *walked* across that "haven" dry-shod! I flung my map into it and picked it up dry! Like the lucent lake of a desert mirage, the "haven" had vanished, leaving not a salt pool behind. Subsequently, on turning to a topographical account of Suffolk, written about twenty years ago, I learnt that Thorpe Haven, or Mere, then occupied an area of 1,000 acres and was divided into two parts by a wall of earth. A later account described it as an "insignificant tidal mere." So it evidently had a real existence, though no one seems to have known very much about it. A native of the hamlet (which is a part of the parish of Aldringham) assured me that there "used to be some bit o' water standing about," and that he had "heard tell of there being a kind o' little harbour at one time"; but "there didn't fare to be no signs of it now." Why, I asked myself, was it so difficult to find out what had become of this large or "insignificant" haven? As a last resource I sought the aid of Suckling, the county historian. Surely he would have

something definite to say about it! But no; he too found Aldringham-cum-Thorpe tenacious of its secrets. "I am unable," he writes, "to offer any certain returns of the extent of the village . . . my inquiries . . . not being replied to. The labours and difficulties of a county history are greatly increased when an author is refused a civil answer to a civil letter. Happily this discourtesy is of rare occurrence, though it sometimes does occur." After reading this, I was not surprised to find that my peripatetic precursor, Mackenzie Walcott, left Thorpe and its haven severely alone. Lately I have suspected that traditions of an ancient lawsuit may have had something to do with the reticence displayed in respect to this vanished harbour; for in 1725 there was a dispute about certain manorial royalties. It was then stated that Thorpe Haven was the mouth of a river or creek called the Hundred River, which river "was formerly much deeper and broader than at present, for within the memory of man vessels could pass up and down it, but by length of time and high tides it is now, and has been several years, almost totally choked up with sand." There is also a reference to an "old Thorpe Haven," which was situated about half a mile to the north of the one then in existence; while the ancient name of "Portus de Aldemuth," which was also applied to it, suggests that this was the original mouth of the river Alde.

Thorpe Ness, too, like the haven, may be said to be non-existent; at any rate, the projection of land into the sea here is inappreciable. The hamlet is not without picturesque nooks and corners; but a superfluity of ramshackle bunga-

lows, some of them made out of old railway carriages while others are little better than tool-sheds, does not add to its attractiveness. The sheds and net stores belonging to the fishermen are more in keeping with the primitive appearance of the place, and as a fishing hamlet it is not without interest. From February to August a good many crabs and lobsters are caught, while later in the year there is drift-netting for herrings and sprats. Inshore trawling for soles, plaice, and shrimps, too, finds employment for the fishermen during some months of the year. To any one unacquainted with trawling it may seem strange that fine weather should be unfavourable to this method of fish-capture; the Thorpe men, however, complain that of late years there have been so many bright, calm days that trawling by daylight has been useless. Nearly all the soles and plaice they have taken have been caught at night, when the fish could not see the trawl net.

Having come to the end of the Crag Path and found a way between the straggling cottages of Thorpe, I made my way over the sand-hills to the beach. The tide was out, and a strip of firm sand made walking easy; but the day was warm and windless, the sea without a ripple, and the beach seemed an endless waste, monotonous and dreary. Bordered by low dunes and the lowest of sandy cliffs, it rarely afforded a glimpse of the country lying inland, nor had it much interest for those easily entertained ramblers who find amusement in picking up the "common objects of the sea-shore." Indeed, there is no beach so remarkable as the Suffolk beach for lack of sea-shells, despite the fact that in the Crag period immense banks consisting almost entirely of shells were heaped

up all along what was then the coast. Mr. F. W. Harmer, whilst studying the Crag beds, was much perplexed by the absence of shells from the beach, especially as he had proved by dredging that there was no lack of molluscan life in the adjoining sea. He suggests, as a possible explanation, that the direction of the prevailing winds accounts for the presence or absence of shells. Most of the winter storms prevalent in East Anglia are attended by westerly winds, therefore the shell beaches of the British Isles principally occur on our west coast. On the East Anglian coast shells are rare, but on the Dutch coast they are extraordinarily abundant, enormous quantities being collected for lime-burning. "Shells lie, in fact," writes Mr. Harmer, "as thickly on the beaches and in the estuarine inlets of the Dutch coast as they did on those of East Anglia during the Red Crag period." He concludes therefore that in the Crag period easterly rather than westerly winds must have prevailed on the Suffolk coast.

A few migrating wheatears were making their way southward along the beach, from the pebbles of which they were scarcely distinguishable when they alighted on a patch of shingle. Now and again a tern came flying towards me, its black-capped head looking like a winged bullet. A few ringed plovers took short flights ahead of me until they grew tired of doing so, when they described a half-circle round me and resumed their feeding by the margin of the sea. Save for the birds, and innumerable long-legged crane-flies which floated like dingy thistledown in the air or alighted inelegantly on the sand and shingle, not a living creature was to be seen on the beach between Thorpe Ness and Sizewell. A ship-

wrecked seaman cast upon an uninhabited island could not have found himself upon a more lonely shore.

Sizewell, a small fishing hamlet about 2 miles from Thorpe, is said to have been remarkable for its "precipitous cliffs." Sea encroachment seems to have swept away the high ground which formed them, and Sizewell Gap, where so many cargoes of contraband are said to have been "run," has also been almost destroyed by the waves. "I have, like you," wrote FitzGerald to Charles Keene, "always have, and from a child [have] had, a mysterious feeling about the 'Sizewell Gap.' There were reports of kegs of Hollands found under the Altar Cloth of Theberton Church near by, and we children looked with awe on the 'Revenue Cutters' which passed Aldbro', especially remembering one that went down with all hands, *The Ranger*." So lonely a spot as Sizewell must have been well suited to the secret movements of the smugglers, who, when they had conveyed their kegs and bales through the Gap, could conceal them in the marshes of the Minsmere Level or carry them inland by an ancient and almost deserted trackway across the Westleton heathlands. A little more than a hundred years ago there were only a few fishermen's huts at Sizewell, and their occupants, no doubt, were in league with the free-traders. At any rate, the local shepherds were; for, after a cargo had been landed, they would drive their sheep along the route taken by the carts, and so obliterate all tracks the smugglers had left behind them. Of late years some villas have been built, and a few visitors have come in summer to spend a quiet holiday on the beach.

Northward of Sizewell a narrow strip of low

dunes lies between the beach and the marshlands of the Minsmere Level. From a Thorpe beachman I learnt that the dunes were formerly called "pentlands"—a name not applied to them, so far as I am aware, on any other part of the Suffolk coast. Between Sizewell and Dunwich they are noteworthy as being a habitat of the sea spurge (*Euphorbia Paralias*), a somewhat rare seashore plant which I found to be fairly plentiful here, but which occurs no further northward than the beach at Walberswick. Walking over these sandy dunes proved very wearisome; but now that the low line of so-called cliffs had come to an end there was a wider outlook landward, where the sun-steeped marshlands, dotted here and there with a drainage windmill, were very much like those of some parts of the Broads district. One or two low hills, crowned with a few storm-rent firs, bordered them on the south, while northward the heathery slope of the Dunwich heathlands was dimly seen through a wavering heat haze. On a tongue of cultivated land, slightly elevated above the marsh level, the ruins of a small monastic building called Leiston Chapel were a conspicuous feature of the landscape. They occupy the site of the original Premonstratensian Abbey founded by Ralph de Glanvile; but the site proved so unhealthy, owing, no doubt, to the malarial swamps of the Minsmere Level, that Robert de Ufford, Earl of Suffolk, about the middle of the fourteenth century, built a new abbey, of which there are considerable remains about a mile from Leiston. A few monks appear to have occupied the older establishment until the dissolution of the monasteries, and John Grene, one of the abbots of Leiston,



RUINS OF LEISTON OLD ABBEY.

[*To face p.* 64.

is recorded to have relinquished the abbacy in order to become an anchorite "at the Chapel of St. Mary in the old monastery by the sea."

Here again there seems to have been a harbour, called Minsmere Haven; for an ancient deed is preserved, probably in the Record Office, by which the lord of the manor of Leiston was granted "wreck of the sea from Minsmere Haven to Thorpe Haven." It was formed by the mouth of the little river Minsmere, which drains the neighbouring marshes, but the waters of which now find their way through a sluice into the sea. On its banks there was probably a small fishing hamlet; for there is an isolated cluster of old dilapidated cottages near the sluice, some of which are still inhabited. Suckling prints a quaintly worded Perambulation or Survey of the manor of Leiston, made in 1620, and including the boundaries of the lands adjoining the "Lady Old Abbey" near the Minsmere sluice. From this it appears that there was a beacon at "Syswell" and another at Thorpe.

There was nothing to delay me at the sluice, so, as the sun had gone down and a mist that was almost a fog was gathering over the Minsmere marshes, I hastened over the last mile of beach that lay between me and the darkening slope of Dunwich heath. It was night when I reached the border of the heath, but having set foot on it I was on familiar ground. In spring, when the furze was ablaze with bloom; at midsummer, when the heat of the sun was bursting the swollen seed-pods; and in autumn, when every hollow and hillock was purple with heather, I had crossed this wild waste, and even at night I had easily found my way along the deeply rutted trackway that led

to the crumbling ruins of the ancient town. Indeed, of all the aspects this heath presents at different times of the day and seasons of the year, I like its night aspect best; for then it has a sombre face, befitting a place made desolate by the sea.

While I crossed the heath in the darkness, I told myself that one would be making no whimsical statement in saying that the majority of the inhabitants of England do not fully understand the meaning of the word "night," for they are dwellers in towns where some artificial light robs night of half of its meaning. Night to them is often an unnatural prolongation of the day; it comes upon them unperceived, and before they realise that the sun has set a thousand minor luminaries light them in their comings and goings, which do not cease with the ending of the natural day. They know nothing of the slow changing of day into night, of the gloaming on the heath, the lingering light on the hilltop, the mist on the water-meadow and the afterglow in the west; for them there is no truth in the words "and twilight grey hath in her sober liv'ry all things clad"; they live in a world that tricks the twilight and makes a mock of the night. To the Downland shepherd, to the belated traveller on the moor, to the fisherman on the sea, and to the poacher in the covert night has a different significance; it is either antagonistic or accessory to their schemes and actions, and it is always real. In the city there need be no hour of darkness, but in the country night has its original attributes, and man is face to face with the primeval. His lantern may show him the road or footpath along which he is walking, but its feeble light intensi-

fies the surrounding gloom. Consequently, the countryman has no contempt for the night; the phases of the moon are often considered in his reckonings; the movements of the stars have significance for him; and as he must sometimes be abroad in the darkness, he instinctively cultivates a wariness of habit which in time becomes as natural to him as to any nocturnal animal.

Many men have no love for the night aspect of Nature; they are moved—perhaps stirred deeply—by the glowing radiance or the luminous peace of a sunset, but as soon as the glorious hues of the sun-painted cloud-wrack have faded into grey, the fireside and the lamplight are more to them than the moonlit meadow and the light of the stars. Night to them spells obliteration, and if it suggests anything to them it is that long night which must descend upon all. For other men the night has irresistible fascination, and there are those among them to whom it reveals more than it hides. They have the habit of nocturnal wandering, and it tends to revive certain latent faculties they possess to primitive keenness and activity. They may be on a moor at starless midnight, and will find their way by noting the direction of a scarcely perceptible breeze; the scent of bog myrtle or of water-mint will warn them of the neighbourhood of marish ground; while the cries and movements of night-prowling creatures will make them weather-wise beyond the comprehension of men who roam only by day. Adherence to a determined direction becomes instinctive, so that, while their feet keep to the desired path, their minds are free to wander widely in the realms of darkness, finding substance in the shadowland, reading omens in obscurity,

and solving secrets in the silence. For them daylight has its limitations, but darkness is illimitable; it fetters no fancy, distracts no devotion, disturbs no contemplation; so that they often see more than do those who avoid the darkness, while the silence and solitude impart to them a soothing influence, which helps them to meet daytime distractions and difficulties with an equable mind.

One who is accustomed to roam the countryside by night is often tempted to worship strange gods —half-human pagan divinities for whom the fancy finds a place in the woodland, by the riverside, on the heath, or amid the moonlit corn. Inhabitants now of the realm of Erebus, where each has his or her dark domain, they await a revival of the primitive Nature-worship, finding here and there a proselyte to bow the knee before them, craving a peace he has sought in vain among the warring creeds. The reeds whispering by the lake-side are stirred by the breath of Naiads; Oreads haunt the wind-swept mountain-side, and Dryads wander along the cloisters of the woodland; by day they do not betray their presence, but when Nox, the daughter of Chaos, casts her dark mantle over the earth, they move stealthily in its shadow, revealing themselves only to those who seek believing they shall find. For the nocturnal roamer these deities and nymphs have a real existence; but in the depths of the forest and in the hollows of the glen dwell the nameless gods of the Cimmerii; these no eye has ever seen, nor can the human mind conceive them; for they are the spirits that were worshipped by man when he dwelt in caves and slew his enemy with an axe of stone. Him they filled with fear when they spoke to him by means

of the wind in the cavern, the creak of the bough, and the wail of the unseen bird; but they are worshipped no longer, nor are they feared, save by the timid and the stranger to the night.

Into the realms of sleep we often take with us our cares and distractions, so that our dreams are troubled and we cannot cast off the burden of the day; but to go out into the night instead of into the bed-chamber; to seek the "dusk of leaf-strewn places" and to be "with the dumb woods and the night alone," is often to find a more grateful rest than sleep can afford. By "acting our Antipodes," as Sir Thomas Browne quaintly puts it, we may enter into a new world, where there is nothing to remind us of that in which the greater part of our waking life is passed, and in experiencing new sensations and acquainting ourselves with the unfamiliar aspect of things we are almost bound to forget for a while our woes and worries. For in assuming its night aspect, the countryside reverts to conditions under which the world existed in ages when many of the troubles that now beset us daily were unknown, and in voluntarily submitting ourselves to these conditions and their influences we simplify our own existence by casting aside much that is out of harmony with our surroundings. When our nocturnal wanderings have become habitual we realise as never before the truth of Thoreau's remark, "How unsupportable would be the days, if the night with its dews and darkness did not come to restore the drooping world!" To us, as to him, the moon becomes the "great restorer of antiquity, great enchanter," while in the dense darkness of a moonless night we walk hand in hand with fair

women and brave men of old, conjured up out of the long-gone past.

Quiet summer nights, when the wind has gone down with the sun, and the leaves of the trees lie asleep on the still air; and clear, cold winter nights, when the road is frozen hard, or the crisp snow crunches beneath the feet, are ideal times for being abroad; but there are human moods with which a stormy night is more in harmony, and at the same time conducive to the soothing of an unquiet mind. The strong wind-gusts beating upon a wood; the moaning of the firs on some upland ridge, the rustling of the lake-side reeds, and the racing overhead of the broken cloud-wrack, combine to create a turmoil to which mental conflict seems insignificant. Besides, to go out into a storm is to be physically invigorated. One must at times face the wind and fight against it, and in doing this latent strength is aroused, so that one returns home armed against depression, stimulated to contend with troubles and difficulties.

After these nocturnal musings I returned to Dunwich soon after daybreak to find it a pretty little village of about 150 inhabitants, most of the houses and cottages standing some distance from the edge of the wasting cliffs. Probably only one house now in existence dates from the days when the "town," despite its decay, was still a place of some importance. Some ivy-clad ruins of a Franciscan priory, a fragment of the Norman chapel of a hospital of St. James, and the ruined nave and tower of All Saints' Church, the last-named standing on the very verge of the cliffs, are the only remains of the numerous ecclesiastical buildings that adorned one of the most flourishing towns in East Anglia. The church



DUNWICH FROM THE SEA.

[*To face p.* 70.

TO VIEW
ILLUSTRATION

and the priory ruins stand on fairly high ground, and the conformation of the coast suggests that ancient Dunwich was chiefly built on the northern side of a plateau that lay between the Minsmere and Walberswick marshes—a plateau that at one time, if tradition speak truly, terminated eastward in a tract of woodland called Eastwood. The earliest harbour seems to have been situated near the foot of the somewhat abrupt northerly slope of the plateau, where a small river entered the sea; but after it was blocked up other harbours were constructed nearer Southwold, each being in turn destroyed.

The most picturesque ruins are those of the Franciscan priory, which was founded by Richard Fitz-John and his wife Alice in the reign of Henry III. They stand within a walled enclosure about 7 acres in extent, and are approached through a large gateway, with a smaller one beside it, in the west wall. The ruins are principally those of the conventual church, and with All Saints' Church in the background they make a pleasing picture. Little of the history of this friary has come down to us, but Gardner, the historian of Dunwich, records that the heart of Dame Hawise Poynings was buried in its church. After the dissolution of the monasteries, the friary buildings were devoted to various purposes, one portion being used as the town gaol and another as the town hall. All Saints' Church in its ruined state has nothing remarkable about it, and is chiefly interesting for having inspired Mr. Swinburne to write—

"One hollow tower and hoary,
Naked in the sea-wind stands and moans,
Filled and thrilled with its perpetual story;
Here, where earth is dense with dead men's bones."

The Norman apsidal chancel of the church of St. James's Hospital, standing in the churchyard of a modern church of St. James, is ornamented with some good arcading.

A few other relics of old Dunwich are preserved, but considering the antiquity of the place and the fact that the continual crumbling of the cliffs must have brought to light many treasures and curiosities, there is very little to see. In the village reading-room there is a fine old iron-bound chest in which some of the town deeds are kept; also a small silver mace, a badge and a bailiff's seal. Other seals, together with some Roman relics and a gold ring inscribed "Time trieth reallitie," are preserved at Greyfriars, the seat of the Barne family, but interesting collections made by Gardner and by ancestors of the present owner of Greyfriars have been dispersed. Suckling figures nine old seals, the most remarkable being that of Ethilwald, who was Bishop of Dunwich about 850. This was not found here, but "was dug up by a person in a garden, about 200 yards from the site of the monastery at Eye (in Suffolk), who gave it to the child of a workman employed on a farm in his occupation. The child threw it on the fire, whence its mother rescued it and retained it for Mr. Fenner, who has for many years been in the habit of searching for and of preserving objects of antiquity. . . . The seal appears to be of bronze, mitre-shaped, of two rows of arches, surmounted by a rude fleur-de-lis, and supported by nine wolves' heads in the interstices of the arches, the eyes formed of small garnets, of which only one remains since its being recovered from the fire."

Suckling truly says that "Dunwich is so enveloped in the halo of traditionary splendour

that he who ventures to elucidate its history by pursuing the path of topographical inquiry must exercise unusual caution lest he be misled by imaginary light. The steady ray which truth might have shed on its earliest origin is almost wholly extinguished by the violent assaults of the ocean; for, unlike those ruined cities whose fragments attest their former grandeur, Dunwich is wasted, desolate and void. Its palaces and temples are no more, and its very environs present an aspect lonely, stern, and wild—assimilating well with the wreck of its former prosperity."

The presence of chipped and polished stone implements proves that the site was occupied by man in the Later Stone Age, while the discovery of Roman relics is evidence of a Roman settlement. Several antiquaries are inclined to place the *Sitomagus* of Antonine here, and the course of an ancient road called Stone Street, connecting Dunwich with Caistor (*Venta Icenorum*), near Norwich, can still be traced; but other authorities locate *Sitomagus* at Thetford or at Woolpit near Stowmarket. Even the identity of Dunwich with the "Donmoc" of the Saxons, the see of the earliest bishops of East Anglia, has been disputed; but there seems to be no definite reason for doubting that it was here Felix of Burgundy established the see about the year 632. Suckling affirms that Dunwich was at the height of its importance and dignity during the Saxon period. According to Godwinus, Felix died in 647, and was succeeded in the bishopric by Thomas, Boniface, and Bisus, the last-named being consecrated in 669; while Bede tells us that while Bisus was bishop the diocese of East Anglia was divided into two parts, the old prelate retaining the bishopric

of Dunwich with Suffolk for his diocese, while the diocese of Norfolk had its see at Elmham. Eleven bishops subsequently occupied the episcopal chair, but in the person of Wybred or Wildred, the last Bishop of Dunwich, the dioceses were reunited, and the seat of the bishopric was removed to Elmham. Early historians attribute its removal to the destruction of Dunwich by the Danes.

Investigators of the early history of Dunwich who are incredulous of its importance in Saxon times urge that the Domesday record justifies their doubts; for although Dunwich was a burgh and in the reign of Edward the Confessor had 120 burgesses, it had only one church and was a part of the large estate of Edric of Laxfield. Indeed Blythburgh, a town a few miles away, had greater privileges, as is proved by the following entry in Domesday: "The King hath in Dunwich this custom, that two or three of the Dunwich men shall attend the Hundred Court if they be duly summoned; and if they be so summoned and fail to attend, they shall forfeit two ores . . . and if a thief be taken there, he shall be tried there, but his punishment shall be inflicted at Blythburgh, though his money or personal property shall belong by forfeiture to the lord of Dunwich. . . . And in the time of Edward the Confessor there was no money-changer or banker at Dunwich, but there was one at Blythburgh." At the time of the Survey the manor of Dunwich had passed into the hands of Robert Malet, a Norman baron whose castle was at Eye. By that time the number of burgesses had increased to 236, and there were also 24 freemen, 178 poor people, and three churches. Robert Malet was in possession of the

manor only a short time, for he was banished from the kingdom and Dunwich became a royal demesne.

In the reign of Henry II. Dunwich was, according to William of Newbury, a town of good note, abounding with riches and sundry kinds of merchandise. A more definite idea of its importance can be gained from its fee-farm rent to the Crown being raised from £50 in the time of William I. to £120 13s. 4d., while as an "aid" on the occasion of the marriage of Henry's daughter Maud it paid £133 6s. 8d. when Ipswich was charged only £53 6s. 8d. At this time it seems to have been strongly fortified; for, as we learnt from the account of the invasion of Suffolk by the Flemings in 1173, the invaders first proposed to land here, but were dismayed by the strength of the town. In the first year of King John's reign it was made a free borough under the government of a mayor and bailiffs, but in 1346 its affairs were placed in the hands of two bailiffs, assisted by a recorder and other officers. It had then become a flourishing port. In the reign of Edward I. it possessed 11 ships of war, 16 "fair ships," 20 barks trading to the North Seas and Iceland, and 24 small boats for the home fishery. Most of the warships carried 72 men each. But the sea had already begun to gain upon the land, and it was as a port that the town first suffered. About the middle of the thirteenth century its old harbour was destroyed, and although a new one was constructed it could only be kept open with difficulty on account of the accumulation of sand and shingle from the wasting coast.

The best account of the decay of Dunwich is contained in a MS. written in 1573 and now

preserved in the British Museum. From it we learn that at one time there were six parish churches in the town, but that by about the middle of the sixteenth century four of these—St. Leonard's, St. John's, St. Martin's, and St. Nicholas's—had been "drowned in the sea," the two remaining being St. Peter's and All Saints'. There was also "an ancient and very old church called the Temple, the which church by report was in the Jews' time." Of the monastic establishments, the most important were those of the Franciscans and Dominicans, "very fair buildings"; there were also a hospital of St. James, "which church is a great one, and a large, after the old fashion"; a hospital of Holy Trinity, "whereof the church is now pulled down and decayed"; and chapels of St. Anthony, St. Francis, and St. Katherine, "which three chapels were put down when all other houses of religion were put down." The MS. further states that it was credibly reported that there was also another church, of St. Felix, "which church was very many years past taken and drowned in the sea." The town seems to have been surrounded by an earthen rampart, and the approaches to it were by the Bridge Gate or St. James's Gate, the Middle Gate, the Gylding Gate, and the South Gate. Suckling surmises that the writer of this MS. was the chronicler Stow, who visited Dunwich, where he saw "the remains of a rampart, some tokens of Middlegate, the foundations of down-fallen edifices, and tottering fragments of noble structures, remains of the dead exposed, and naked wells, divested of the ground about them by the waves of the sea; divers coins, several mill-hills, and part of the old key." The "ancient and very old church

called the Temple" belonged to a preceptory of the Knights Templars. It is said to have been a fine building standing "near Middlegate Street, having Duck (? Duke) Street on the north, Covent Garden on the south, distant from All Saints about fifty-five rods." From 1296 to 1832, when it was disenfranchised, Dunwich returned two members to Parliament. Its corporation was dissolved in 1883, when the corporate property was vested in eight trustees.

The sea seems to have wrought its worst havoc at Dunwich during the fourteenth century, when, according to Gardner, four hundred houses were destroyed. Before the middle of the sixteenth century, two of the town gates, in addition to the four churches, had sunk into the sea. In 1702 St. Peter's Church had to be taken down, and in 1715 the gaol was undermined. The effects of a violent storm in December, 1740, are thus described by Gardner: "The wind blowing very hard about north-east, with a continuance for several days, occasioned great seas, doing much damage on the coast during that time by inundations, breaking down the banks, and overflowing many marshes, &c. The sad effects thereof were severely felt by Dunwich, when a great deal of its cliffs were washed away, with the last remains of St. Nicholas church-yard; and a great road heretofore leading into the town from the key; leaving several naked wells, tokens of ancient buildings, and from Maison Dieu Lane northwards, a continued scene of confusion. Part of the old key, built with stone, lay bare, making canals cross the beach, through which the river had communications with the sea, to the hindrance of the people on foot travelling that way for some

days. . . . The sea raged with such fury that Cock and Hen Hills, which the preceding summer were upwards of forty feet high and in the winter partly washed away, this year had their heads levelled with their bases, and the ground about them so rent and torn that the foundation of St. Francis chapel, which was laid between the said hills, was discovered. . . . The bounds of the cemetery were staked, within which the secret repositories of the dead were exposed to open view: several skeletons on the ouze divested of their coverings; some lying in pretty good order, others interrupted and scattered as the surges carried them. Also a stone coffin, wherein were human bones covered with tiles . . . at the same time and near the chapel the pipes of an aqueduct were found—some of lead, others of grey earth, like that of some urns." In 1746 and 1749 similar discoveries were made when the sea scoured away much of the beach lying to the north of the town; while about 1754 All Saints', the last of the old churches, was dismantled for fear that it might be destroyed. It is, however, still standing, in a ruined state, and it has been suggested that the value of its bells and lead had something to do with its being abandoned at a time when it was in no immediate danger. In 1826 it was about 200 feet from the sea; now it stands on the very verge of the cliff, and before many years have elapsed it will probably be entirely destroyed. For the sea's siege is still going on. Between 1824 and 1844 some 20 acres of land were lost. In November and December, 1897, large masses of cliff were dislodged, and in 1904 a high tide did so much damage that some wooden buildings on the beach had to be

moved some distance inland. One of these buildings had been erected on a part of the old quay.

Dunwich is a pleasant little village with a bold line of cliffs, some shady lanes, picturesque by-roads, and a main street bordered by cottages and one or two larger houses, most of which have well-kept gardens of old-fashioned flowers. A few visitors come to it every summer, and probably more would do so if they could find accommodation. Apart from its scanty ruins there is nothing about it suggestive of its former importance; but this is not surprising, seeing that the sites of most of its ancient buildings are now beneath the sea. Its chief fascination is in its appeal to the imagination. Its fate has often been described; more than one romance has been written about it; and its vanished glories have been sung, not only by local bards, like Bird of Yoxford and Agnes Strickland, but also by Mr. Swinburne, whose fine poem is a fitting dirge for the dead city:—

"Here, where sharp the sea-bird shrills his ditty,
Flickering flame-wise through the clear live calm,
Rose triumphal, crowning all a city,
Roofs exalted once with prayer and psalm,
Built of holy hands for holy pity,
Frank and fruitful as a sheltering palm.

Church and hospice wrought in faultless fashion,
Hall and chancel bounteous and sublime,
Wide and sweet and glorious as compassion,
Filled and thrilled with force of choral chime,
Filled with spirit of prayer and thrilled with passion,
Hailed a God more merciful than Time.

. . . . .

Low and loud and long, a voice for ever,
  Sounds the wind's clear story like a song.
Tomb from tomb the waves devouring sever,
  Dust from dust as years relapse along;
Graves where men made sure to rest, and never
  Lie dismantled by the season's wrong.

. . . . .

Rows on rows and line by line they crumble,
  They that thought for all time through to be.
Scarce a stone whereon a child might stumble
  Breaks the grim field paced alone of me.
Earth, and men, and all their gods wax humble
  Here, where Time brings pasture to the sea."

CHAPTER V

BLYTHBURGH, WALBERSWICK, AND SOUTHWOLD

"In the midst of the little town
The church-tower old and brown
On the clustered roofs looked down,
Its old chimes softly pealing;
The mariners out at sea
Oft heard their melody
O'er the sunset waters stealing."

J. F. TATTERSALL.

SOUTH, west, and north-west of Dunwich there are many square miles of country which have never been cultivated—sandy or stony tracts with all the rich colouring of moorland about them, where thickets of gorse and miniature forests of bracken border wide expanses of heather; where the whinchat and the linnet flit to and fro between the furze-bushes and the sad voice of the green plover is heard by night as well as by day. Some, if not all of these heaths are old sheep-walks, and they are crossed by several tracks that were formerly drove roads; but one old sandy trackway, which crosses Westleton Walks and descends into the Minsmere valley to East Bridge, where there was an ancient ford, is probably a portion of a Roman road that connected Stone Street and

Dunwich with the Roman settlements at Aldringham and Walton. Here and there a solitary barrow, deeply tunnelled by the rabbits, remains as a relic of prehistoric times, while fragments of buried urns, brought to light when roadside banks are being made, probably mark the sites of Anglo-Saxon cemeteries of East Anglia's pagan days. Then, there were probably little Anglian settlements established along or near the roads the Romans had made, but we know nothing of them, save what is told by the relics at times turned up by the spade or the plough. A little later, when Anna was King of East Anglia and Boniface was Bishop of Dunwich, a battle was fought at Bulcamp, in the parish of Blythburgh, between the Christianised East Anglians and an army sent here by Penda, the pagan King of Mercia. Anna, whose "royal palace" is said by Suckling to have been at Dunwich, was slain in this battle, and with him fell Firminius, who some say was his son and others his brother. Tradition asserts that they were interred in the Saxon church at Blythburgh, their bones being afterwards removed to Bury St. Edmunds.

The road through Blythburgh is the one every traveller from Dunwich to Southwold should choose; for he can easily visit Walberswick by way of the ferry over the Blyth. The village, which is built on the south side of the river from which it takes its name, shows some signs of its former importance, and the fact that in Saxon times it had privileges denied to Dunwich proves that it must have been even then a flourishing little township. In a charter granted by Henry II. it is stated that a market had been held in the town from remote times. It formerly carried



WALBERSWICK.

[*To face p.* 82.

on a considerable maritime trade, but its sea-going ships seem to have discharged their cargoes at Dunwich quay, and for many years there were disputes between its inhabitants and the Dunwich officials about the payment of harbour dues. Finding that the bailiffs of Dunwich were not disposed to forgo their right to receive these dues, the men of Blythburgh persuaded the masters of ships to discharge their cargoes at Walberswick quay. This the bailiffs considered an unlawful act; so they sent their sergeant, one Hyam, bearing the corporation mace, to arrest the transgressors. The latter refused to be arrested, and showed so great a disregard of Dunwich dignity and authority as to take the mace by force from its bearer and keep it for a whole day. With the blocking up of Dunwich harbour, the trade of Blythburgh declined. Until then it was a thriving place, "the residence of merchants and reputable persons, well frequented upon account of its trade, and divers other affairs . . . especially the fishing." It was a town of several streets, lanes, and alleys; quarter sessions and meetings of clergy were held in it; and persons who misconducted themselves in any part of what was then called the Beccles division of Suffolk were imprisoned in its gaol. In 1676 it was almost destroyed by fire, and to-day there are only one or two houses dating from the seventeenth century. Near the church are some scanty remains of an Augustinian priory that was founded in the reign of Henry II. by the abbot and monks of St. Osyth's Abbey in Essex. A Holy Rood Chapel stood on the north side of the main street leading to the bridge over the Blyth, but there is now no recognisable portion of it.

The glory of Blythburgh, and of this part of Suffolk, is the magnificent church, which dominates the village and contrasts strikingly with its mean surroundings. Built in the Perpendicular style of the fifteenth century, it must have been originally remarkable for the splendour of its decorative work, the remains of which are still of great interest. Approached from the village, or seen from the low ground crossed by the little tramway-like Halesworth and Southwold railway, its graceful tower, its beautiful clerestory, and its splendid south aisle parapet are well seen; but there are features of its exterior demanding closer inspection, among them being the grotesque figures on the buttresses, the ornamentation of the porch, and the curious inscription beneath the east window. This inscription, which is inlaid with flints, has been a puzzle to many ecclesiologists. Sir W. R. Gowers, who dealt with it in the "Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archæology," thought that it might be read "Ad Nomina Jesu Beati Sanctæ Trinitatis (Beatæ) Mariæ et in Honorem Sanctorum Annæ et Katherinæ (hic cancellus) Reconstructus." Much beautiful ornamentation, including a great number of armorial carvings, has been defaced or destroyed, and the finials or pinnacles that terminated the plinths between the clerestory lights have disappeared, but of late years care has been taken to prevent further destruction and decay, and some conservative restoration has been carried out. The interior has much that is noteworthy, especially the carving of the choir stalls and some quaint poppy-heads, a beautiful fifteenth-century lectern, an unusual kind of poor's-box of about the same date,

the rood screen, a fine font, and the tombs traditionally said to be those of King Anna and Prince Firminius, but which are probably those of members of the families of Hopton and Swillington. There is also a curious clock "Jack," which used to strike the hours on a bell, and beneath the dial of which was inscribed the lines—

"As the hours pass away,
So doth the life of man decay.
1682"

Stow, in his "Annals," writes that: "On Sunday, 4 Aug. 1557, between the hours of nine and ten o'clock in the forenoon, whilst the minister was reading the second lesson in the parish church of Blithburgh . . . a strange and terrible tempest of Lightning and Thunder struck through the wall of the same church into the ground, almost a yard deep; drove down all the people on that side of the church, about twenty persons; then renting the wall up to the Revestry, cleft the door, and returned to the steeple, rent the timber, brake the chains, and fled towards Bungay. The people that were stricken down were found grovelling more than half an hour after, whereof a man and a boy were found dead; the others were scorched." At Bungay, towards which town the lightning "fled," even stranger scenes were witnessed. "There were assembled at the same season to hear Divine service and common prayer, according to order, in the parish church of the said town of Bungay, the people thereabouts inhabiting, who were witness of the strangeness, the rareness, and the suddenness of the storm, consisting of

rain falling violently, fearful flashes of lightning, and terrible cracks of thunder, which came with such unwonted force and power, that to the perceiving of the people, at the time and in the place above named assembled, the church did as it were quake and stagger, which struck into the hearts of those that were present such a sore and sudden fear, that they were robbed in a manner of their right wits. Immediately hereupon there appeared in a most horrible similitude and likeness to the congregation then and there present a dog, as they might discern it, of a black colour, at the sight whereof, together with the fearful flashes of fire which then were seen, moved such admiration in the minds of the assembly, that they thought doomday had already come. This black dog, or the devil in such a likeness (God He knoweth all who worketh all) running all along down the body of the church with great swiftness, and incredible haste, among the people, in a visible form and shape, passed between two persons, as they were kneeling upon their knees, and occupied in prayer as it seemed, wrung the necks of them both at one instant clean backward, insomuch that even at the moment where they kneeled they strangely died. This is a wonderful example of God's wrath, no doubt to terrify us, that we might fear Him for His justice, or pulling back our footsteps from the paths of sin, to love Him for His mercy. To our matter again. There was at the same time another wonder wrought; for the same black dog, still continuing and remaining in one and the self-same shape, passing by an other man of the congregation in the church, gave him such a gripe on the back that therewith all he was presently drawn together with a string.

The man, albeit he was in so strange a taking, died not, but as it is thought is yet alive, which thing is marvelous in the eyes of men, and offereth much matter of amazing the mind. Moreover, and beside this, the clerk of the same church, being occupied in cleansing of the gutter of the church, by a violent clap of thunder was smitten down, and beside his fall had no further harm; unto whom being all amazed this strange shape, whereof we have before spoken, appeared; howbeit he escaped without danger, which might peradventure seem to sound against truth, and to be a thing incredible."

There is a charming old restored house close beside the churchyard, and the house adjoining it, occupied by Mr. Seymour Lucas, the artist, has been reconstructed in a way that makes it a delight to the eye; the old White Hart Inn, too, about a hundred yards distant, which was the court-house in the days when quarter sessions were held at Blythburgh, is well worth a visit on account of its carved ceilings and woodwork; but the view of the Blyth valley from the churchyard is one of so much peaceful pastoral charm that attention is constantly being drawn from the relics of Blythburgh's past by the alluring loveliness of the somnolent lowlands and the rich colouring of their bordering heaths. The late George Gissing, when sitting idle by the fireside, in the winter dusk, in that Devonshire cottage in which he spent the last few years of his life, found, he tells us, his fancy wander, "leading him far and wide in a dream of summer England," and one of the pictures he conjured up before him was that of the valley of the Blyth. "The stream ripples and glances over its brown bed

warmed with sunbeams; by its bank the green flags wave and rustle, and, all about, the meadows shine in pure gold of buttercups. The hawthorn hedges are a mass of gleaming blossom, which scents the breeze. There above rises the heath, yellow-mantled with gorse, and beyond, if I walk for an hour or two, I shall come out upon the sandy cliffs of Suffolk, and look over the northern sea." In autumn also, when the wide beds of reeds by the riverside are turning from golden-brown to amber; when beyond the water-meadows the Henham woodlands are rivalling the reed-beds in rich colouring; and when meadow, wood, and heath are bathed in a misty sunlight, the valley of the Blyth is a valley of rest and loveliness, a place for idling and dreaming.

All along the pleasant heath road from Blythburgh to Walberswick one gets glimpses of the gleaming waters of the Blyth beyond the bracken and between the firs of the valley slope, and beside that road, during the latter part of October and the beginning of November, one can see the late harvest of the bracken-cutter in progress, and the long, low stacks of ruddy brown fern rising among the corn-stacks in the farmyards. Then, too, when the gorse, which here and there has been in flower since April, seems to be bursting into full bloom again, the furze-cutter can be seen at work—his russet clothing harmonising well with the brown bracken and bleaching bents. Old green roads along which, no doubt, there were many travellers in the days when Dunwich and Blythburgh were busier places than they are to-day, cross the heaths in all directions, and tempt the leisurely footfarer to explore the wilderness of furze and heather,

but in a little while the lofty tower of Walberswick's ruined church comes in sight, and then there is more excuse for loitering; for Walberswick is the most picturesque village on the Suffolk coast.

The cottages seem to have been built and grouped together for the benefit of artists; the wooden bridges that span the dykes in the salt marshes are wonders of curious rustic work; the shanties in which the fishermen store their gear and smoke their sprats and herrings are delightful to the eye of the painter and a shock to the nerves of the architect; hulks, capstans, anchors, chains, spars, and every kind of wreckage lie strewn about in picturesque disorder; while ocean, river, salt marsh, heathland, firs, and the grand old ruined church combine to make Walberswick a delightful little village and an ideal place for a quiet holiday. Just across the Blyth, the quay and buildings connected with Southwold's new harbour have entirely altered the appearance of the north bank of the river, but Walberswick remains unchanged, save that during the last three months of the year the presence of a number of Scotch "kipper girls," who lodge in the village and are rowed to and from the Southwold fish wharf, gives it yet another picturesque feature. These buxom lassies, clad in glistening oilskin overalls and wearing heavy, high-topped boots, considerably enliven the village during their stay in it. No one can watch them at work upon the herrings without being amazed at their dexterity, nor can one listen to their singing—and they are nearly always singing—without wishing that they were always here, to brighten the lives of the somewhat lethargic local fisher-folk.

Walberswick, like Dunwich and Blythburgh, was in early times a flourishing little seaport; in the fourteenth century it had thirteen barks trading to Iceland and the Faroe Isles, besides twenty-two fishing vessels. It was one of the chief ports for "shipping off" the famous Suffolk cheese and butter. Mr. C. R. Barrett* states that there is a curious ordinance, dated 1609, which enjoins that the old men of Walberswick "should employ themselves in the coasting trade with butter, if they had in their youth been fishers, while the young men should diligently attend to fishing craft, as tending to the production of able masters of ships and skilful pilots for the service of the nation." Defoe, writing in 1722, after referring to Southwold as being a place where "speaking in their own language they make red sprats, or to speak good English, they make sprats red," adds, in regard to Dunwich, that "what little trade they have is carried on by Walderswick, a little town near Swole (Southwold), the vessels coming in there, because the ruins of Dunwich make the shore there unsafe to the boats"; he also chaffs a "late famous atlas-maker" for calling the Blyth "a good harbour for ships and rendezvous for the royal navy . . . the author, it seems, knew no better." For a while Walberswick thrived on the decay of Dunwich, but after the Reformation matters went badly with it; for with the abandoning of the keeping of fast days there was a considerable falling-off in the demand for fish, and in consequence this and other fishing villages suffered severely. Serious fires, too, helped to bring about its decay.

To these troubles and disasters the ruinated state

* "Tours in East Anglia," p. 39.

of its church is mainly due. The building of this grand old church was begun about 1473, when an earlier one, which stood near the marshes, was pulled down. It was completed a few years later, its length being 124 feet and its breadth 60 feet, the large chancel occupying 41 feet of the entire length. Like Blythburgh Church, it had a fine clerestory, of which two windows can still be seen; and its interior was richly furnished and adorned with images of the Holy Trinity, the Virgin, St. Andrew, St. John the Evangelist, and several other saints. A large sum of money must have been expended before the church was finished, and at the end of the fifteenth century the churchwardens were so short of funds that they had to sell the great bell, which weighed 1,707 lbs. and realised £26 8s. 9d. The serious fires helped to impoverish the village, and then Dowsing the iconoclast arrived on the scene, destroyed the church windows and demolished the images and 40 lbs. weight of monumental brasses. By this time the village must have become not only poor but very thinly populated; for in 1695 the inhabitants petitioned to be allowed to take down the roof of the nave, chancel and north aisle and sell three of their four bells, the proceeds to be devoted to reconstructing the south aisle and making it serve as a church. This petition was granted, and to-day we see a small church, with nothing interesting about it save its old font and some carved oak panelling, standing within the walls of a larger one. As a ruin, however, Walberswick Church is beautiful, though not so beautiful as Covehithe Church, which we shall see presently.

The ferry pontoon at Walberswick is a dingy

copy of that at Bawdsey, but it serves well enough to make a passage over the narrow Blyth to Southwold, where it lands the traveller near the western end of the new fishmarket. Ten minutes' walk then brings him into the midst of the town.

Southwold, my coast-exploring forerunner Walcott tells me, "is the wreck of a considerable town, once the rival of Dunwich. On April 25, 1659, a terrible fire nearly destroyed the entire place, and it has never recovered from the calamity." This was written forty-eight years ago, and since then sunny Southwold has not only recovered from the effects of its disastrous fire, but has withstood the attacks of a far more insidious enemy, water, and has become a fixed star in East Anglia's bright constellation of coast resorts. Indeed, I question if even in the days of its rivalry with Dunwich it was so flourishing a place and had so enviable a reputation as it has to-day. Situation, surroundings, and a commendable indisposition on the part of its authorities to try and allure the boisterous tripper have tended to preserve its original charm; it has steadily advanced in the favour of quiet folk, and in all probability there is no seaside town between Felixstowe and Hunstanton which could show a longer list of regular visitors. In fact Southwold has a character of its own, and you may form a pretty accurate estimate of the temperament of a visitor to it if you know whether he finds the place delightful or dull.

A seventeenth-century writer describes Southwold as being "an island environed with salt water," and although salt water no longer covers the lowlands lying north, south, and west of the town, its insular position is still so noticeable that, when the sea besieges its cliffs, foreboding folk



SOUTHWOLD HARBOUR.

[*To face p. 92.*

picture to themselves a time when the hill on which it is built shall again be a sea-girt isle. Bordered on the south by the Blyth and on the north and west by Buss Creek, a little stream that goes by the name of the ancient fishing-boats which formerly made use of it, it is still almost engirdled by water and marshland, but the scenery has changed from that of an ooze-bounded estuary to that of flower-bespangled water-meadow and winding stream. The town has had to adapt itself to the demands of its pleasure-seeking patrons, and its pier, its hotels, and its boarding-houses, while they have increased its popularity, have not added to its picturesqueness, but the breezy heaths, the quaint colonies of the fishermen, the pleasant cliff walks, the slumbrous lowlands, and the peaceful hamlets have all their primitive, alluring charm. Scarcely any exhibition of paintings can now be considered complete without some picture of Southwold, and during several months of the year artists are so numerous round about the town as almost to constitute a characteristic feature of the scenery. Especially attractive to them are the creeks and cottages down in the marshes, and the fishermen's curious beach sheds, some of them built of wreck timber and adorned with old ships' figureheads and nameboards.

The town is built on a gravelly hill showing a bold front to the sea—a fact accountable for much of the damage done to it by the encroaching waves. Many years ago a point, or promontory, called Easton Ness, situated on the north of the town, served as a protection to the sea-front, but where the ness existed there is now a small bay, and the town itself has become a projecting point, subject to frequent erosion. At one spot some 600 feet of

land has been lost during the last seventy years, and considerable sums of money have been expended in protecting the foreshore and cliffs, and in repairing the damage done by high tides and stormy seas. These troubles have not dismayed the townsfolk, who have not only waged war against the sea, but have also reconstructed their silted-up harbour and made a bold bid for a share in the profits of the great herring fishery of the East Anglian coast.

The disastrous fire that nearly destroyed Southwold some 250 years ago is responsible for the town's lack of antiquities; apart from the church, there is hardly a building in the place worth a second glance. The church is one of the finest in Suffolk. Dating from the beginning of the fifteenth century, it has a fine though apparently unfinished tower, while its exterior, and especially the beautiful south porch, is ornamented with fine flint panelling. Most of the doors probably date from the building of the church, the west door being noteworthy on account of its carving of St. Edmund the Martyr, to whom the church is dedicated. The various badges and emblems on the doors and windows, and the graceful niches on each side of the west window deserve particular attention. Inside, the perfect proportion of the pillars and arches is noticeable; and the effect of the fine roof, unbroken by a chancel arch, is very striking. The iconoclastic Dowsing, who visited the church in 1643, writes in his diary: "We broke down 130 superstitious pictures, St. Andrew and four crosses on the four corners of the vestry, and gave orders to take down thirteen cherubims, twenty angels, and the cover of the font;" but despite these orders, which

led to the decapitation of the cherubim and angels on the roof (a destruction which has been repaired), the church contains some beautiful wood carving. The screen has been sadly mutilated; much of its carving is sawn away, and a good deal of the delicate gesso work is destroyed; but it is still splendid with its elegantly fretted spirelets and other enrichments. Some of its paintings were restored by Sir W. B. Richmond. The finely carved and richly painted pulpit dates, like the screen, from the fifteenth century. Here, as at Blythburgh, there is a quaint clock "Jack," in this case a carved wooden figure of a man in armour, holding in his left hand a sword and in his right a small battle-axe, with which, when a cord is pulled, he smites a bell and announces that service is about to begin. Formerly, this little figure, which is generally known as "Jack Smite the Clock," stood on a bracket over the western arch and was connected with the clock in the tower.

The church is lacking in interesting monuments, but in the churchyard is the grave of Agnes Strickland, the historian of the Queens of England, who died in Park Lane Cottage, Southwold, in 1874. Beside her is interred her sister and biographer, Jane Strickland. Many Southwold people can remember the "handsome Miss Stricklands," who were born at Reydon, a parish adjoining the town, in a fine Elizabethan house that has lately been restored and enlarged. Another grave, near the entrance to the chancel, is that of Thomas Gardner, the historian of Dunwich. He died in 1769, and his gravestone is quaintly inscribed—

> "Between Honour and Virtue here doth lie
> The remains of old antiquity."

The point of this inscription is that Gardner was buried between his two wives, the epitaphs to whom begin, respectively, with the words "Honour" and "Virtue." Near the churchyard, on Bartholomew Green, are the old town stocks and whipping-post. The stocks were last used in 1850.

Southwold is a municipal borough, but as such it has nothing like the antiquity of Orford and Aldeburgh, its charter of incorporation having been granted in 1489. Long before then it was merely a hamlet of Reydon, of which parish the prior of Thetford was patron, though the abbot of St. Edmundsbury was lord of Southwold. The right to hold an annual fair was given to the town at an early date. In 1789 one Margaret Dean was keeper of the common gaol and market, and on fair days it was her duty to collect the following fees:—

	s.	d.
Bakers' Stalls Tilted	1	6
Ballad Singers' Standing	0	2
Basket Makers' Groundage	0	2
Braziers' Stalls	3	0
Fruit Pads or Baskets	0	2
Hard Ware or Toy Stalls	1	6
Hatters' Stalls	1	6
Hosiers' Stalls	1	0
Milliners' Stalls	2	6
Nuts or Orange Stalls	0	6
Potters' or Glass Stalls	1	0
Potters' or Glass Groundage	0	6
Quack Doctors on Horseback	1	0
Silversmiths' Stalls	2	6
Tables with Lotteries	0	4
Wooden Ware Stalls...	0	6

Some idea of the state of Southwold in the sixteenth century may be gained from an account

written by Tobias Gentleman, whose father was bailiff of the town. He says that: "In the Towns of Southwold, Dunwich, and Walderswick is a very good breed of fishermen; and there are belonging unto those three towns, of the North Sea boats, some twenty sail, and of Iceland barks, some fifty sail, which yearly they send for Cod and Lings to Iceland. This town of Southwold, of a sea-coast town is the most beneficial unto his Majesty of all the Towns in England, by reason all their trade is unto Iceland for Lings, and his Majesty's Sergeant-eater hath yearly, gratis, out of every ship and bark one hundred of the choicest and fairest Lings, which are worth more than ten pounds the hundred, and they call them composition fish. But these men of this place are greatly hindered . . . by reason their Haven is so bad, and in a manner often stopped up with beach and shingle stone that the wind and the tide and the sea do beat thither, so that many tides in the season when they be ready to go to sea they cannot get out, when time is to go to sea, neither can they get in when they return from sea, but oftentimes do cast away their goods and themselves." William Waynfleet, writing in 1666, remarks upon the fact that "Southwold being an island environed with salt water, might be made the strongest in those parts; it has nine good guns, but only four fixed, and not ammunition enough for two hours' skirmishing; the town is poor, and cannot do what it would, and the country does not help, though they say it would be their destruction if the town were held by an enemy; it is the nearest town in England to Holland, and the best bay."

Sole, or Southwold, Bay can hardly be said to

exist to-day, the headlands that sheltered its safe anchorage having been washed away; but in 1672 it could accommodate the allied fleets of England and France, numbering over a hundred vessels; for it was here that, on the 28th of May of that year, the English and French ships were riding at anchor when a Dutch fleet, consisting of 91 men-of-war, 44 fire-ships, and 23 tenders, came down upon them and began the memorable sea-fight of Sole Bay. According to Hume, the allied fleets were lying "in a very negligent posture" when De Ruyter appeared on the scene, but the gallant Earl of Sandwich, who had warned the Duke of York of the danger of his position, was cruelly told that "there was more of caution than of courage in his apprehensions." On sighting the Dutch, however, the captains of many of the English ships had to cut their cables in order to be in readiness for the attack. Sandwich was in command of the van, and so admirably did he behave that the whole fleet was indebted to him for its safety. Sailing out of the bay, where De Ruyter would have had him at his mercy, he drew upon himself the fire of the Dutch ships, and so enabled the remainder of the English and the French vessels to get clear of each other and form into line of battle. He killed the Dutch admiral, Van Ghent, beat off his ship, sunk another ship when its crew tried to board him, destroyed three fire-ships, and although his vessel, the *Royal James*, was almost a wreck, and of her crew of a thousand men nearly six hundred lay dead upon the deck, he kept up a constant fire upon the enemy. At length another fire-ship grappled with the *Royal James* and set her on fire. Her captain, Sir Richard Haddock, besought Sandwich to make

his escape, but he would not do so, and many of the crew refused to abandon their heroic leader. Every effort to quench the flames proved useless, and about noon the blazing hull of the battered ship drifted on to Easton Ness, where it blew up and nearly every one on board perished. Some days afterwards the body of the gallant Earl, still bearing the Order of the Garter, was picked up by the crew of a ketch off Harwich, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Whilst Sandwich was fighting against heavy odds, De Ruyter had attacked the Duke of York, and so fiercely was the fight maintained that his Royal Highness afterwards declared that of all the actions in which he had been engaged this was the sharpest and longest. His ship was disabled, and had not Sir Joseph Jordan, who had succeeded to Sandwich's command, come to his assistance his squadron would have been overpowered. The battle lasted until nightfall, when the Dutch retired, the losses of the two fleets being about equal. The French suffered very slightly, having withdrawn from the fight early in the day, acting, it is said, under secret orders "to spare their ships, while the Dutch and English should weaken each other by their mutual animosity."

Southwold folk saw little or nothing of this great battle waged almost at their doors, a dense fog hiding the contending fleets, but as the day advanced a fear arose that the English might be defeated and the Dutch might attempt to make a landing on the shore. Consequently, a "strong guard" was mustered in readiness to engage the enemy, and the country people who had flocked into the town to see the fight were not allowed to return home until it was known that the Dutch

had retired. Subsequently, some local bard composed the following "merry song on the Duke's late glorious success over the Dutch in Southwold-bay":—

"One day as I was sitting still
Upon the side of Dunwich hill,
And looking on the ocean,
By chance I saw De Ruyter's fleet
With royal James's squadron meet;
In sooth, it was a noble treat
To see that brave commotion.

I cannot stay to name the names
Of all the ships that fought with James,
Their number or their tonnage;
But this I say, the noble host
Right gallantly did take his post,
And covered all the hollow coast
From Walderswyck to Dunwich.

The French, who should have joined the Duke,
Full far astern did lag and look,
Although their hulls were lighter;
But nobly faced the Duke of York,
Though some may wink and some may talk
Right stoutly did his vessel stalk
To buffet with De Ruyter.

Well might you hear their guns, I guess
From Sizewell-gap to Easton-ness,
The show was rare and sightly;
They battered without let or stay
Until the evening of that day;
'Twas then the Dutchmen ran away—
The Duke had beat them tightly.

Of all the battles gained at sea,
This was the rarest victory
Since Philip's grand Armada;
I will not name the rebel Blake,
He fought for Horson Cromwell's sake,
And yet was forced three days to take
To quell the Dutch bravado.

So now we've seen them take to flight,
This way and that, where'er they might,
To windward or to lew'ard;
Here's to King Charles and here's to James,
And here's to all the captains' names,
And here's to all the Suffolk dames;
And here's the house of Stuart."

The sole—I beg pardon—the only relic of the battle of Sole Bay is a grim-looking monster which was the figurehead of one of the Dutch ships; it now serves the purpose of a signboard outside Martlesham Red Lion, an inn several miles from Southwold, on the Ipswich and Woodbridge road. In Southwold the memory of two land battles is kept alive by the presence of six old guns on Gun Hill. They are said to have been captured from Sir John Cope by the Young Pretender at Prestonpans in 1745, and recaptured by the Duke of Cumberland at Culloden in the following year. According to Dr. Wake, an historian of Southwold, the Duke, returning by sea from Scotland, landed at Southwold under stress of weather, and was rather apprehensive lest the slaughter at Culloden should prove as unpopular in England as in the north. Of this apprehension the enthusiasm of the people of Southwold relieved him, and "out of gratitude" he gave them the six guns. A fact that casts some doubt on this story is that on the 16th of January, 1745, the authorities at Whitehall, in response to an appeal from Southwold, ordered that a supply of cannon and stores should be sent to the town.

CHAPTER VI

SOUTHWOLD TO LOWESTOFT

"Ill suits the road with one in haste, but we
Played with our time; and, as we strolled along,
It was our occupation to observe
Such objects as the waves had tossed ashore

. . . . .

Each on the other heaped, along the line
Of the dry wreck."

WORDSWORTH.

A LOW cliff of clay and Norwich Crag extends a short distance northward of Southwold, and a footpath along the top of it leads to Easton, once a considerable village, now a sea-wasted hamlet with a population of about a score persons and without a house or even a fisherman's cottage on its shore. The village, of which no trace remains, was built on the cliff, which formerly projected so far into the sea as to have in its ness the easternmost land in England, but the tradition that the place was once an important and populous town seems to be quite without foundation; for at the time of the Domesday survey it was a wasted and impoverished village, and before the end of the sixteenth century its church of St. Nicholas was destroyed by the sea. A Chapel of St.

Margaret was in use for some years afterwards, a marriage being solemnised in it in 1638; but at the beginning of the eighteenth century it had been converted into a barn. Gardner, the "old antiquity" whose grave we have seen in Southwold churchyard, states that in 1784 he witnessed at Easton an interesting ceremony, of which he gives the following account: "Queen Anne's Bounty favouring this parish, publication was made for the celebration of divine service there on Trinity Sunday. The like not remembered, several persons out of a religious curiosity attended, where a barn was the temple, a chair and little table occupied the places of desk and pulpit; for pews were substituted stools and benches; and the want of mats was sufficiently supplied by a plenty of straw that covered the area of the nave of the church. Prayer and the thirty-nine Articles of Religion were read in form, and psalm-singing twice; after that the blessing. Also notice was given that a sermon would be preached in the afternoon, which was a motive that induced many people to travel thither, so that our place of worship was pretty well filled. This made a lively impression in my memory of the relation of Glastonbury elder thatched church, with wicker walls. Prayers ended, and an edifying oration from 2 Timothy, chap. i., ver. 13, succeeded, with seasonable exhortations to adhere to the principles of the Church of England, as by law established. The chorus thrice repeated, and the declaration of the Minister's assent to the afore-mentioned articles which he had subscribed, to which I was then a witness, the auditory departed highly pleased with the entertainment they had; all things being done

decently and in order, so far as the place would permit, by the Rev. Mr. North."

Beyond the point where the cliff ends, a narrow strip of shingly beach lies between the sea and Easton Broad, a placid little shore lagoon, receiving the waters of a tiny stream. As seen from the seashore, the lagoon has a background of woodland. Coots, moorhens, ducks, and little grebes are usually plentiful on the open water and among the reed-beds of this secluded little broad, and in stormy weather its waters are often almost covered with seagulls, while terns come to circle over the surface and dip for the small fish that abound in the weedy shallows. In severe wintry weather rarer birds, such as divers, goosanders, mergansers, and smew are sometimes driven to seek shelter here, while great crested, red-necked, and Sclavonian grebes are among the "odd" birds that have fallen to the wildfowler's gun. Redshanks and ringed plovers frequent the shores of the broad in summer, and in autumn, when large numbers of wading birds make a southward passage down the coast, knots, stints, dunlins, and curlew-sandpipers occasionally stop to rest a while on its margin. Only a small tract of furzy warren separates Easton from Covehithe Broad, a smaller and more "grown-up" pool.

Covehithe Broad was at one time open to the sea, and had a hythe, or staithe, at which coasting vessels could take in and unload cargoes: it was probably the "port" of Easton and of the parish of North Hales, which now goes by the name of Covehithe. From the neighbourhood of the broad the land rises slightly to the north, forming another low cliff, chiefly interesting because



EASTON BROAD.

[*To face p.* 104.

on several occasions, when the sea has undermined it, landslides have taken place, exposing curious well-like middens containing kitchen refuse, oyster-shells, and fragments of Romano-British pottery. That these middens belonged to one or more Roman villas was made the more probable by the discovery of a Roman strigil, an implement used by the Romans for cleaning the body after taking a bath; but all traces of a Roman settlement have been destroyed by the encroaching sea. An old road called at Covehithe the Long Row and elsewhere Brampton Street, runs from the edge of the cliff almost straight across the country to the Roman road known as Stone Street.

Close beside this old road, about a mile from the sea, stands Covehithe Church, a ruinated building, splendid in its decay. A fine lofty tower and the walls of the nave and chancel remain, but the roofs have fallen and the window tracery is gone, while within the nave a small thatched church, built in 1672, is dwarfed to insignificance by the height of the surrounding walls. The decay of what was once a thriving village—a fair was granted to it by Edward I.—is probably responsible for this grand old church having become a ruin, but the destructive Dowsing had a share in destroying it. "We brake down," he writes, "200 pictures—one pope with divers cardinals—Christ and the Virgin Mary—a picture of God the Father, among others which I remember not. There was four steps with a vault underneath. But the two first might be levelled, which we gave orders to the churchwardens to do. There was many inscriptions to Jesus in capital letters on the roof of the church, and cherubims with crosses on

their breasts, and a cross in the chancel; all which, with divers pictures in the windows which we could not reach, neither would they" (presumably the churchwardens) "help us to raise the ladders —all which we left a warrant with them to do in fourteen days." All of which goes to prove that Covehithe Church, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, was a building worthy of a district remarkable for its splendid churches.

Desolate Covehithe was probably the birthplace of John Bale, the Protestant Bishop of Ossory, a powerful writer in defence of the principles of the Reformation and one of the founders of the English drama. In a notice appended to one of his publications in the "Harleian Miscellany," he is stated to be the son of Henry Bale, of *Covie* in Suffolk, and *Covie*, as Mr. J. Hooper rightly says, is "almost the exact vulgar pronunciation of the name of this parish at the present time." He was the author of many Moralities and historical plays, intermediate between which is his drama of "King John," which seems to have been written to support the principles of Protestantism and to cast ridicule upon the Church of Rome by showing into how many "holy religions" it was divided. His best-known work is in Latin, and is remarkable for containing an account of the illustrious writers of Great Britain from Japhet (!) down to the year 1559.

Near the seaward end of the Long Lane the cliff-top footpath comes to an end, and the footfarer who goes on to Kessingland by the seashore must choose between the beach and a more or less indefinite path which skirts the border of the marshes and, as Kessingland is approached, crosses a pleasant strip of grassy "denes" on the land-

ward side of the sand-hills. The marshes here lie in the valley of a small stream called the Hundred River, which enters the sea about midway between Covehithe and Kessingland, by way of a sluice. A mile or so southward of the stream some beds of reeds mark the site of Benacre Broad, where there was formerly a duck decoy by means of which considerable numbers of wild-fowl were taken during the winter, but the decoy pipe is now disused in consequence of the "growing up" of the broad. This stretch of coast has a deserted look, the only buildings near the beach being the sluice-keeper's cottage and a submarine cable office, but the denes are a pleasant enough loitering-place on a summer's day, while the sand-hills form an easy lounge from which to watch the deep-sea ships go by or the lapwings wheeling over the water-meadows. A few people who dislike beaches crowded with holiday-makers have discovered this lonely one, and have found it "grow upon them." In the end it satisfies them as being all that a sea-beach need be, and they come to it year after year, just to loiter amid the dunes and cast pebbles into the sea. Perhaps, when they leave it, they can say, like Walt Whitman, "There is a dream, a picture, that for years at intervals . . . has come noiselessly up to me. . . . It is nothing more or less than a stretch of interminable white-brown sand, hard and smooth and broad, with the ocean perpetually, grandly, rolling in upon it, with slow-measured sweep, with rustle and hiss and foam, and many a thump as of low bass drums. This scene, this picture, I say, has risen before me at times for years. Sometimes I wake at night and can hear and see it plainly."

The sand-hills come to an end at Kessingland, where the lower part of a rather large village borders a street leading down to the beach. The higher part, extending for some distance along either side of the old coach road from Lowestoft to London, is nearly a mile away; but Kessingland is a growing place, and during the last few years many new houses have been built, forming connecting links between the upper and lower village. A little 'longshore fishing is carried on in an irregular way, but most of the local fishermen are employed on board of the trawlers and drifters belonging to Lowestoft. Apart from its church, a restored building with a good tower and an interesting font, there is nothing particularly interesting in the village, which is visited every year, however, by a fair number of holiday-makers, chiefly family parties, on account of its fine, wide beach. Less than any other place between Southwold and Gorleston has it suffered from encroachment of the sea, though the cliffs to the north of the village have been so wasted that within the memory of men still living whole fields have been washed away. Mr. H. Rider Haggard, who has a house near the cliff-edge within the bounds of Kessingland—a house that was once a coastguard station and, in earlier years, a famous resort of smugglers—remarks, in his "Farmer's Year," that the beach here is increasing in width, and that in a single year there was so great an accumulation of sand and shingle as to add five feet to its height; but within a mile of this spot the owners and occupiers of land adjoining the beach have a different story to tell. Writing of the great gale of December, 1897, Mr. Haggard says it "will long be remembered on the east coast

for its terrible amount of damage. The sight close to a house which I possess at Kessingland . . . was something to remember, for here and at Pakefield the high cliff has been taken away by the thousand tons. In such a tide the fierce scour from the north licks the sand cliff and hollows it out till the clay stratum above it falls, and is washed into the ocean. Fortunately for me, my house is protected by a sea-wall, and though the water got behind the end of this, it did no further damage; but with the property that was not so fortified the case was very different —it has gone in mouthfuls. Old residents on the coast declare that no such tide has been known within the present century, and it is to be hoped that there will not be another for the next century. But these phenomenal events have an unpleasant way of repeating themselves, and if this happens the loss and desolation will be very great—greater than that of the December gale. For generations the sea has been encroaching on this coast. So long ago as the time of Queen Elizabeth it is said that three churches went over the cliff in a single Sunday afternoon; yet during all this time no concerted effort has been made for the common protection. If we were Dutchmen the matter would have been different, but here in rural England, unless they are forced to it by Act of Parliament, it is almost impossible to oblige people to combine to win future profits or ward off future dangers."

The almost unbroken line of cliffs between Kessingland and Lowestoft is the most imposing to be seen along the Suffolk coast, though it is more remarkable for its geological interest

than for its height, which is nowhere more than about 70 feet. On the pages of the stratigraphical record preserved here, the geologist finds imprinted a story reading almost like a romance; for it tells him that ages ago, when England was united with the Continent of Europe by land covering a part of the area now occupied by the North Sea, the river now known as the Rhine flowed as far westward as Kessingland, where it turned northward and followed more or less closely the trend of the present coast-line as far as Cromer. It is represented in the Kessingland and Pakefield cliffs by the estuarine deposits of the so-called Forest Bed, which are well exposed only when the beach at the base of the cliffs is scoured away by the waves. Then tree-trunks and the bones of extinct animals are brought to light, all, or nearly all, of them showing signs of having been washed down to the place where they are found by the waters of the great river, which left them stranded on the ooze flats which had formed at a bend of its course. Remains of two extinct species of elephant, the cave bear, the giant elk, and three species of rhinoceros are among the relics of the fauna that inhabited the shores of the river in this long-gone age, while from the seeds and leaves found preserved in an oozy stratum of the Forest Bed the botanist is able to tell what kind of vegetation grew by the riverside and on the bordering marshes. Years ago, before the falling of the cliffs had covered most of the Forest Bed deposits with sand and masses of Boulder Clay, two or three old beachmen were always on the look-out for fossilised bones of the wonderful animals which, as the old men would say, "lived before the Flood."

Overlying the Forest Bed deposits in the cliffs are some interesting glacial deposits, the lower chiefly consisting of fine buff sand, representing a comparatively mild interval of the Great Ice Age, while the upper, which forms the surface soil, was deposited during a period when the glaciers that covered the greater part of East Anglia extended almost as far southward as the valley of the Thames. The Middle Glacial Sand, as it is called, contains in places fragments of marine shells, while in the Boulder Clay ammonites and belemnites are found, as well as boulders of various kinds of rock, derived from older deposits over which the glaciers ground their way as they descended upon the lowlands of Norfolk and Suffolk.

There are two clefts or "gaps" in the cliffs between Kessingland and Pakefield, made by small watercourses that have been converted into field drains. At the landward end of the southern cleft stands a disused low-towered lighthouse. The northern cleft, which Walcott calls a "deep ravine," but which is now much reduced in size owing to the washing away of the cliffs, goes by the name of Crazy Mary's Hole, the story being that it was frequented by a love-sick girl who became mad after her lover was drowned at sea.

It is a three-mile walk from Kessingland to Pakefield along the top of the cliffs. Northward, there is a good view of Lowestoft with its pier, its harbour, and its long sea-front, while southward the curving coast-line is visible as far as Covehithe, Southwold being hidden by a projecting point called Covehithe Ness. Landward the outlook is over a flat, uninteresting country until Pakefield is approached, when the view opens out a little

into the valley of a shrunken stream flowing into Lowestoft Harbour. A few new houses have lately sprung up on a breezy expanse of grass-land lying between the coast-bordering fields and the older part of the village, but care has been taken to build them some distance back from the cliff; for of late years Pakefield, more than any other village on the Suffolk coast, has suffered from the ravage of the sea. The old rectory, the manor-house, some villas, two inns, and several cottages have either gone "down cliff" or have been pulled down just in time to prevent the sea from demolishing them, a village green has been entirely eaten away, and the main street, which at its seaward end was connected with a road leading to Kirkley, has become a *cul-de-sac*, abruptly terminating on the edge of the precipitous cliff. Protective works carried out at Lowestoft and Kirkley are held responsible for the destruction wrought at Pakefield; for it is the experience of East Coast folk that where groynes and breakwaters are constructed to protect one part of the foreshore they serve to create a scour to the southward—and Pakefield, being a small village not yet included in the borough of Lowestoft, has been unable to spend any considerable sum of money in safeguarding itself against assaults of the sea. Something has been attempted, something done, but at present Pakefield is in a parlous state and looks towards the future with fear and foreboding.

In the village street there are one or two quaint old houses, and the church is curious in having its nave and its single aisle of the same dimensions, each having a roof of thatch. There are also some brasses, including a remarkable

one to John Bowf (1417), with the following inscription:—

"Al shul we hen
Whider ne when
May no man ken
But God above
For other we car
Hen shul we far
Ful pore and bar
Thus seyd John Bowf."

The Pakefield beachmen were formerly known to themselves and others as the "roaring boys," and some puzzling lines, apparently belonging to an old song, run:—

"The roaring boys of Pakefield,
Oh, how they do thrive!
They had but one poor parson,
And him they buried alive."

The late Archdeacon Hindes Groome, who quoted these lines in the *Ipswich Journal* some thirty years ago, remarked: "Whether the prosperity of Pakefield was to be dated or derived from the fact of their burying their 'one poor parson' is a matter of dangerous speculation, and had better be left in safe obscurity; else other places might be tempted to make trial of the successful plan." One thing, at any rate, is clear, which is that the parson whom the "roaring boys" treated so badly was not the Rev. Francis Cunningham, who was rector of Pakefield from 1814 to 1830, and who married Richenda Gurney, a sister of the celebrated Elizabeth Fry. He, it is true, was the "hero" of a curious burying story, to which I shall have occasion to refer presently; but he deserves to be

remembered, not only on account of his many excellent qualities, but because it was to him that George Borrow was indebted for his introduction to the British and Foreign Bible Society—an event that not only resulted in Borrow's being sent to Russia, but also in our possessing that fascinating book, the contents of which are so greatly misrepresented by its title, "The Bible in Spain." It was to Francis Cunningham, too, that Borrow first made known his intention of making a special study of the Gypsy language, with the view of publishing "a kind of vocabulary" of it. This was in 1832, but it was not until 1874 that his "Romano Lavo-Lil," or "English Gypsy Language," was published by John Murray.

CHAPTER VII

LOWESTOFT

"'Describe the Borough'—though our idle tribe
May love description, can we so describe,
That you shall fairly streets and buildings trace,
And all that gives distinction to a place?
This cannot be; yet, moved by your request,
A part I paint—let Fancy form the rest."

CRABBE.

LOWESTOFT, the easternmost town in England, one of the most popular of English watering-places, and an important centre of the trawl and herring fisheries, is a borough including the parish of Kirkley, and having a long sea-front, extending from Pakefield on the south to Gunton on the north, while westward, on either side of tidal Lake Lothing, it extends to the bounds of a new urban district situated around that famous pleasure and yachting resort, Oulton Broad. That its site was inhabited by man in the remote period when England was joined to the Continent by land existing over a part of the area now occupied by the North Sea, has been proved by the discovery of flint implements of the Palæolithic or Early Stone Age in the plateau gravels of the hamlet of Normanston, while the fact that some of the fields immediately surrounding the town

are plentifully strewn with flint flakes and implements of the Neolithic or Later Stone Age indicates that a later prehistoric race, in a more advanced, though still primitive, stage of culture, established settlements on or near the shores of Lake Lothing. Evidence of Roman occupation of the site has been discovered in the shape of coins and other relics, chiefly met with on the comparatively high ground in the western part of the town known as Roman Hill; but although the position of Lowestoft suggests its suitability for an outpost station in connection with the great *castellum* at Burgh Castle, no Roman relic pointing to a military occupation appears to have been met with. Nor have any Saxon remains been definitely identified, although fragments of Saxon pottery have been found a few miles north of the town, and some of the homestead moats in the immediate neighbourhood may perhaps be assigned to an ante-Norman date. The name Lothu Wistoft, by which the town is mentioned in Domesday, seems to embody a Germanic personal name represented by the Anglo-Saxon Hlodwig and the modern German Ludwig, in which connection it is interesting to note that the half-hundred of Lothingland, in which it is situated, was formerly written Lodingland.

From the time of the Norman conquest of England, when Lowestoft was retained by the Conqueror as a royal demesne, until a little more than a hundred years ago, the inhabitants of the town were mainly concerned in herring fishing, and disputes with the Yarmouth authorities, who, on the strength of a charter granted in 1373, tried to prevent any herrings being bought and sold



LOWESTOFT HARBOUR.

[*To face p.* 116.

within a distance of seven "lucæ" of the larger town, gave rise to most of the important and exciting events in which the people of Lowestoft played a prominent part. During the civil war of the reign of Charles I., however, some of the leading townsmen were so strongly attached to the cause of the king that Oliver Cromwell, with five troops of horse, eighty volunteer dragoons, and an additional body of foot volunteers with five pieces of ordnance, marched against the town on the 29th of March, 1643, and took possession of it. From a letter written by Mr. J. Cory, of Norwich, and printed in Carlyle's "Letters of Oliver Cromwell," we learn that when Cromwell arrived at Lowestoft he found "that the town had blocked themselves up, all except where they had placed their ordnance, which were three pieces, before which a chain was drawn to keep off the horse. The Colonel surrounded the town and demanded that they should give up the strangers, the town, and their army, promising them their favour, if so; if not, none. They yielded to deliver their strangers, but not the rest. Whereupon our Norwich dragoons crept under the chain before mentioned, and came within pistol shot of the ordnance, preparing to fire upon their cannoneer, who fled. So they gained the two(!) pieces of ordnance and broke the chain, and they and their horses entered the town without resistance."

As soon as the advantages of sea-bathing were recognised, and inland spas became less popular than many seaside towns, Lowestoft came into favour with holiday-making and health-seeking folk, and since the opening of its first railway it has gone on increasing in size and popularity. A hundred years ago, when one of

its earliest "Guides" was written "by a Lady," it was already in considerable repute, and in consequence of its increasing fame "a mania for building and for beautifying their dwellings" had taken possession of its inhabitants; but at that time the town was little more than a fair-sized village, chiefly situated on the high ground sloping down to the north bank of Lake Lothing. Southward of the site of the present harbour bridge, where a narrow neck of land divided the harbour from what was then a fresh-water lake, there was a wide stretch of sandy waste-land on which scarcely a house had been built; but at the foot of the picturesque gardens sloping down from the back of the old houses on the east side of High Street, a colony of fishermen and beachmen existed, their pebble-built cottages and wooden curing sheds occupying about three-quarters of a mile of the denes bordering the North Beach. The so-called harbour was little more than a small cove or inlet, the waters of which extended nearly to the lower end of Old Nelson Street, and close beside it stood a fort or battery, mounting twenty-six guns and containing a bomb-proof powder magazine, sunk in the earth. There was another battery, mounting four 18-pounders, near the lighthouse.

Coaches, post-chaises, and imposing family chariots conveyed visitors to Lowestoft until 1847, when a railway from the junction station at Reedham was opened, and crowds of excursionists began to flock into the town. By that time a spacious inner harbour had been made by cutting a channel through the neck of land at the east end of Lake Lothing, and a few years later the construction of a pier and an esplanade,

the latter bordered by a number of uniform and unimposing villas, initiated the development of a South Lowestoft on the south side of the harbour. At the present time the town has all the usual adjuncts of a first-class seaside resort, including two fine piers, a handsome pier pavilion, a long esplanade, two small but picturesque parks, and a well-fitted-up theatre, while it boasts that, notwithstanding its popularity, it has few attractions for those somewhat boisterous holiday-makers who prefer the noisy and fair-like gaiety of Yarmouth beach. To the north of the town, at the foot of a line of heathery cliffs from which the sea receded several hundred years ago, a wide expanse of breezy denes affords a delightful ramble for visitors and a playground for their children, while the nearness of Oulton Broad makes Lowestoft a convenient centre from which trips can be taken into Broadland. The charming wood-engirdled Fritton Lake can be reached by a few minutes' rail journey or an easy bicycle ride; Yarmouth, Gorleston, Kessingland, and Southwold are well within an hour's journey by rail, steamer, or motor omnibus. Several of the country churches in the neighbourhood of the town have features of considerable interest, the district being especially rich in good examples of those round towers which are particularly associated with East Anglia and probably of Norman date. In literary associations the town and its surroundings are rich. Thomas Nashe, the brilliant but dissolute sixteenth-century satirist, was a native of Lowestoft; the picturesque old house in the Sparrow's Nest was the home of the Aldersons, a family to which Mrs. Opie, the novelist, belonged; Normanston manor-house,

which overlooks Lake Lothing about midway between Lowestoft and Oulton Broad, was the birthplace of Frederick Denison Maurice, the friend of Kingsley, Carlyle, and Tennyson, and it was also an occasional resort of the poet Crabbe; while the two southernmost houses of Marine Terrace, on the east side of London Road were frequently occupied by Edward FitzGerald, who wrote here many of his delightful letters to Fanny Kemble and other friends. At Oulton, on the bank of the Broad, the old summer-house in which George Borrow wrote "Lavengro," "The Romany Rye," and "The Bible in Spain," can still be seen, although the house in which he lived and died has made way for a modern villa; Blundeston, a village a mile or two westward of the main road from Lowestoft to Yarmouth, has been immortalised by Dickens, who made it the home of David Copperfield. With Blundeston the name of the poet Gray, too, is associated, for he was occasionally the guest of the Rev. Norton Nicholls at Blundeston Lodge.

Lowestoft parish church, which stands on fairly high ground some distance inland of the town, has some features of archæological interest, noteworthy among them being a well-preserved processional cross locker and a gravestone retaining the matrix of a brass to Thomas Scrope, Bishop of Dromore, who died in the town in 1491 at the good old age of a hundred years. This worthy bishop, who, according to Fuller, preached in various parts of the country "clothed in hair and sackcloth, and girt with an iron chain," was the author of a learned treatise on the Carmelite order of frairs. He seems to have been the first of a series of literary rectors of Lowestoft,

the most famous of whom were William Whiston, who succeeded Sir Isaac Newton in his professorship at Cambridge, and who was a friend of Pope and Addison; and the scholarly Robert Potter, who made excellent translations of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Potter, who died in 1804, was buried in the churchyard, where a tomb erected to his memory bore an inscription in which reference was made to his literary fame and the esteem in which he was held by his parishioners. So little did a later generation value this memorial of a famous scholar, that they permitted, apparently without a word of protest, its removal and destruction. Probably, as coast-dwellers, they had a greater admiration for men whose noteworthy exploits were performed at sea rather than in the domain of letters, and of such heroes this easternmost of English towns has produced not a few. Within the church there are several memorial inscriptions to gallant seamen and distinguished admirals, while in Somerleyton Church, a few miles distant, Sir Thomas Allen, another famous naval hero, who was a native of Lowestoft, is buried.

Admiral Sir Thomas Allen, one of those brave old sea-dogs who maintained the maritime supremacy of England during the latter half of the seventeenth century, received an early training in naval warfare in the days when Lowestoft and Yarmouth were continually at loggerheads about their respective sea fisheries. If, as there is reason to believe, he was that Captain Allen who appears on the scene in 1644, his first recorded exploits have about them a strong suggestion of buccaneering. During the civil war of the reign of Charles I., Yarmouth was a

Parliamentary stronghold, while Lowestoft, as we have already learnt, espoused the Royal cause. Both towns fitted out armed vessels, ostensibly to support their respective leaders, but actually to wage war on each other. Among the vessels captured by the Yarmouth men was a pink belonging in part to Captain Allen, who, on hearing of its capture, determined to do his utmost to harass Yarmouth's maritime trade. "For this purpose," writes Suckling, the historian of Suffolk, "he retired beyond the sea, and fitted out a small squadron of ships, with which he returned, and in 1644 destroyed twenty of the Yarmouth vessels then employed in the Iceland fisheries. His brief success, however, was completely crushed by the Parliament, which in the following year sent their ships of war to protect the fishermen, and disperse the hostile squadron. . . . In consequence of the inferiority of his force, Captain Allen was compelled to retire to Flanders, whence he addressed a letter to the bailiffs of Yarmouth, enjoining them, under the penalty of severe retaliation, to treat their prisoners well, and set them at liberty. On Sunday, the 13th of January, 1648, this spirited commander sailed boldly into Yarmouth Roads, in order to put his threats into force by burning the town, and destroying the ships in the harbour. He did not, however, carry his purpose into effect, which he probably found too great to achieve."

Twenty-one years later Captain (then Admiral Sir Thomas) Allen began hostilities against the Dutch by attacking their Smyrna fleet of forty merchant ships, while in the same year he, with other local captains, had a share in a naval battle fought off Lowestoft between the English

and Dutch fleets. This historical sea-fight, in which the Duke of York, with 114 ships, defeated Admiral Opdam and sunk or captured about forty of his vessels, commenced at three o'clock in the morning of June 3rd and was kept up until eight in the evening, when Van Tromp, who took command of the Dutch fleet after Opdam and his two vice-admirals were killed, managed to escape with about thirty ships. Only one English ship was lost, but several persons of distinction were slain, including the Earl of Falmouth and Lord Muskerry. The Hon. James Howard, youngest son of Thomas, Earl of Berkshire, was mortally wounded and died soon after being brought ashore. He is buried in the chancel of Lowestoft Church.

Twelve months later, when another naval battle, lasting four days, was fought between the English and the Dutch, Sir Thomas Allen appears to have been in command of an English squadron; for after the battle, when the Dutch admiral De Ruyter, having repaired his ships, took up a position near the mouth of the Thames, Allen, commanding the White squadron attacked the Dutch van, which he completely routed. In the same year he attacked the French fleet and captured the *Ruby*, a ship of 1,000 tons and 54 guns. At the termination of the war he was sent, with a strong squadron, to suppress the Algerine pirates who for a long time had committed depredations on the English merchant shipping. This was his last public service, for on returning home he settled down to a quiet country life at Somerleyton Hall, where he spent the remainder of his days.

One might fill many pages by relating how

one or another brave old Lowestoft seaman distinguished himself by indomitable courage and daring deeds in the days when individual valour and dogged determination were so largely responsible for maintaining England's supremacy at sea. It was a Lowestoft captain, John Ashby, who was selected by King William for the honour of knighthood at the same time that Cloudesley Shovel was raised to that dignity, and although his conduct after the battle off Cape La Hogue was unfavourably commented on by Bishop Burnet, who declared that he (Sir John Ashby) might have destroyed every French ship which succeeded in escaping, the House of Commons, after inquiring into the matter, informed the gallant seaman that it had "observed his ingenious behaviour in his detail of his conduct in that engagement, and received the amplest satisfaction." Of the death of another Lowestoft captain, Andrew Leake, who was knighted by Queen Anne after the attack upon the French fleet in Vigo Harbour, a moving story is told. In the Malaga fight, "after Sir Andrew had received his fatal wound, and was carried down to the surgeons to be dressed, his heroic soul, fired with the love of his country, and burning with an insatiable thirst for glory, would not suffer him to remain inactive; but despising death, though surrounded with all its terrors, he wrapped a table-cloth round his wounded body, and though possessing only the small remains of life, he placed himself in his elbow chair, and gave orders to be carried again upon the quarter deck, where he bravely sat and partook of the glories of the day until he nobly breathed his last." Admiral James Mighells, who, in 1719, during the war

with Spain, brought home from the Spanish coast treasure valued at £80,000, to say nothing of a great quantity of arms and ammunition which had been got together for a proposed invasion of England, was yet another famous seaman to whom there is a monument in Lowestoft Church; while a contemporary naval hero, whose bravery is also commemorated in the church, was Captain Thomas Arnold, who, in 1718, led the boarding party which captured the Spanish admiral's ship *Royal Philip*. This last-named hero was a member of a family that for four hundred years was intimately connected with Lowestoft, and from whose house in the High Street the flag of the *Royal Philip* was displayed on gala days until a few years ago.

One of the most interesting places in Lowestoft is its beachmen's colony, situated at the foot of the old line of cliffs on which a considerable portion of the town is built. In the days when the coasting trade of England was entirely carried on by means of sailing ships, the Lowestoft beachmen were to a large extent dependent upon salvage work for a livelihood. They banded themselves together in rival parties, known as beach companies, and whenever a ship ran ashore or struck on one of the sand-banks lying off the coast, long, graceful yawls, examples of which can still be seen lying on the North Beach, were launched from the shore and a strenuous race ensued, the crew of each yawl striving their utmost to be the first to reach the endangered vessel. By the laws of salvage, the first boat to establish a communication with a ship was entitled to a reward for its services; consequently there was rarely any lack of assistance when a ship was in distress; but as

the beachmen were adepts at "bargaining" with captains who were unfortunate enough to get into difficulties, they had a bad reputation among seamen and ship-owners, "'longshore sharks" and "pirates" being, perhaps, the least offensive names by which they were known. Occasionally a wary shipmaster, familiar with the ways of the local salvage-seekers, would refuse to accept their proffered aid, and would even threaten them with a handspike or a capstan bar if they should try to board his vessel; but as a rule their services were accepted, and then the last state of that vessel was often worse than the first. True, by laying out anchors or jettisoning a part of the cargo, she might be dragged or floated off the shoal and brought safely into port; but by the time that the claims of the salvagers were settled the owner was often as badly off as if he had lost her altogether. For the beachmen, however, it must be said that they lived a hard life and often ran great risks in launching their yawls in stormy weather, and not infrequently they were afloat for many hours while searching for some ship that, stripped of her sails, burnt a flare as a signal of distress as she drifted before the storm in the darkness of a winter's night. Crabbe, who described them as being

> "A bold, artful, surly, savage race"

who

> "Wait on the shore, and as the waves run high,
> On the toss'd vessel bend their eager eye;
> Which to the coast directs its vent'rous way,
> Theirs, or the ocean's miserable prey,"

might also have shown us the other side of the picture; and it must not be forgotten that the



SHED OF THE OLD COMPANY OF BEACHMEN, LOWESTOFT.

[*To face p.* 126.

beachmen have always manned the lifeboats by means of which so many lives have been saved along this exposed and dangerous part of the East Anglian coast.

Some years ago I had a chat with an old beachman who was several times afloat in the first Lowestoft lifeboat, the *Frances Ann*, which was presented to the town in 1809. From his description of the boat, she appears to have been a precursor of the present Norfolk and Suffolk type of lifeboat; for she had a broad belt of cork round her outside below the gunwale and extra buoyancy was provided by means of watertight casks stowed under the thwarts. In this boat my beachman friend, then a young man, experienced several of what another old acquaintance of mine, Robert Wright, the coxswain of the Fleetwood boat, used to call "rough dos." One Sunday in 1830 a schooner called the *Bishop Blaze* struck on the Newcome Sand, off Pakefield. It was just before nightfall when she grounded, but despite the darkness and a strong north-easterly gale the Pakefield men launched their yawl and managed to get alongside the distressed vessel. Her captain, however, would only accept the assistance of two of the Pakefield men, who shortly afterwards returned to the yawl. Subsequently four of the schooner's crew put off for the shore in their long boat, leaving the captain and the mate, who refused to abandon their ship. During the night the violence of the storm increased, and as there was no lifeboat stationed at Pakefield or Kessingland, news was brought to Lowestoft that the two men were still on board. The *Frances Ann* was at once launched, and when she reached the *Bishop Blaze* the captain and the mate were

seen clinging to the main rigging, with the lamp swinging to and fro above their heads. Seven times the boat was brought alongside the doomed ship, but each time she was swept away by the huge waves, the tide being at flood. The eighth attempt proved successful, and the nearly exhausted men were safely lowered into the boat. So long were the gallant lifeboatmen afloat that their friends ashore feared some disaster had overtaken them, and when they reached Lowestoft hundreds of people flocked down to the beach to welcome them home. In later days sad scenes were witnessed at Lowestoft in consequence of the lifeboatmen refusing to launch their boat while lives were being lost close to the shore. Then, and only then, so far as I am aware, the men allowed a real or imagined grievance to have more weight with them than the piteous cries of drowning men. Many hard things were said of them, and that they were blameworthy no one can deny; but the fact that while Bob Hook, a still-surviving veteran, was coxswain of the Lowestoft lifeboats, some six hundred lives were saved by him and his crews proves that lack of courage has never been a failing of the Lowestoft men.

A century ago there was little difference between a salvage man and a smuggler, the beachmen being, in nine cases out of ten, dependent on both salvage work and smuggling for a livelihood. Most of the old members of the beach companies have tales to tell of cargo-running exploits performed by or with the assistance of their fathers or grandfathers, who, if these stories be true, often made use of the cliff clefts north and south of the town when kegs or bales of contraband goods were landed and conveyed to *caches* in the

marshes or to well-like hiding-places in the gardens of certain members of the smuggling gang. One story, now somewhat vague in its details, relates how the local smugglers contrived to get the chief excise officer carried off by a press gang at the time when a lugger laden with contraband was lying off the coast; but a more popular yarn, of which there are two or three versions, has been told on such good authority that there seems to be little doubt as to its being true. It appears that early in the last century the Rev. Francis Cunningham, who was appointed to the living of Lowestoft in 1810, was visited at his home by a sailor who said that he belonged to a ship then lying in the harbour, and that he had come to request the ministrations of the rector for a member of the crew, who was dying on board the ship. Although it was late at night, the rector promptly complied with his visitor's request, and on boarding the ship he was conducted to a bunk in which a man was lying, apparently about to breathe his last breath. On the following evening he was informed that the man was dead, and that his dying request had been that he should be buried in Lowestoft churchyard. The rector agreed to carry out the wish of the deceased, and he made no objection when it was further asked of him that he would conduct the burial service at eight o'clock in the morning, so that the ship could set sail on the next tide. Accordingly, at eight o'clock of the following morning a coffin was brought to the churchyard and lowered into a grave which, by the rector's instructions, had been dug during the night. Twenty-four hours later Mr. Cunningham was astonished to learn that the newly made grave had been opened and the coffin

and its contents carried away. It then became known that he had been deceived by a clever piece of acting on the part of the supposed dying man, and that the coffin over which he had read the burial service was filled with valuable lace.

Another rector of Lowestoft, the famous William Whiston, has recorded a curious incident illustrative of the peculiar views held by the local men regarding certain illicit practices which any one, reading between the lines, can easily connect with the contraband trade. In his "Memoir of the Life of Dr. Samuel Clarke" he writes: "One strange incident happened at Lowestoft, when Mr. Clarke came once thither to see me, which he and I never forgot. . . . We went together aboard one of the small trading ships belonging to that town, and as we were on shipboard we took notice of two of the seamen that were jointly lifting up a vessel out of the hold: when another seaman that stood by, clapped one of them on his shoulder, and asked him why he did not turn his face away? (for he was looking down as if he would see what he and his fellow were lifting out of the hold). Upon which he turned his face away; but continued to assist in lifting it up notwithstanding. The meaning of which we soon understood to be this: that he would be obliged to swear he *saw* nothing taken out of the hold; not that he *took* nothing out of it. This," Whiston goes on to remark, "is the consequence of our multiplying oaths on every trifling occasion! and this it seems is a seaman's salve for perjury!"

Smuggling is by no means extinct in Lowestoft, so far as the bringing in of tobacco and cigars and bottles of scent is concerned; but it is a petty

business compared with what it was a century ago. Mr. H. Jefferies, of Lowestoft, tells me that the last member of the "old gang" of cargo-runners was James Saunders, who was known as the "King of the Smugglers." In the sixties, when his race was nearly run, he was a hale, burly, bluff old fellow, over 6 feet in height, a little strident in voice, and with a manner commanding respect and ensuring obedience. He then kept a small inn at Kirkley—an inn resorted to by many who loved to hear tales of a seafaring life and especially of the old "free-trading" days.

To return to the beach companies. Each company possessed, in addition to its yawl, one or more long, slender gigs. These boats, built for use in calm weather, were rowed with eight, ten, or twelve oars, and were generally launched in foggy weather in order that the beachmen might make what was called a "seeking" voyage, that is, go in search of ships that were fog-bound or in difficulties among the sand-banks. They were also used in putting pilots on board of ships; for in the early days of the beach companies there were no pilot cutters stationed in or cruising about the North Sea, the pilots keeping a look-out from the land until a vessel was sighted which required their aid. In carrying on this work, also, there was rivalry between the different companies, and not infrequently two, if not three, gigs, each carrying a pilot, would compete in an exciting race towards some ship that happened to be flying the "jack." In stormy weather the yawls would be used for the same purpose. In those days most of the pilots' work was done in conjunction with the beach companies; for the authorities at Trinity House were less strict with their pilots than they

are to-day. The import trade of the country, though large, was nothing compared with what it is now; consequently the men whose business it was to guide the ships through the shoals and in and out of the harbours were often unemployed for days and weeks together, and they were glad to take up 'longshore or herring fishing as an additional means of livelihood. This the Trinity House authorities permitted, only stipulating that when a pilot went a-fishing he should leave his license ashore, either at one of the lighthouses or at the custom-house of the nearest port, where it was kept until he resumed his duties.

The busy steam-tugs which are constantly cruising in the North Sea now take most of the salvage work out of the beachmen's hands, and the yawls and gigs which were so often afloat in the days when the roadsteads were crowded with wind-bound sailing coasters lie idle on the beach for weeks and months together. At Lowestoft, however, three of the old salvage bands, the Old Company, the Young Company, and the North Roads Company, still survive, each having its headquarters in a wooden shed on the North Beach. The Old Company's shed, a tarred and red-tiled building standing near the coastguard station, has its exterior adorned with the figureheads and name-boards of several ships that were wrecked on the coast, and in it, on winter days, when storms are raging, the older members of the company sit around a glowing fire, talking of the wrecks, the rescues, and the salvages of fifty or more years ago. At times they cheer themselves by singing or listening to quaint old sea songs, some of which, in all probability, have never been seen in print, while others are ancient

chanties, learnt by some of the beachmen during spells of deep-sea voyaging. Most of the men can sing a song of some kind if called upon to do so, and a few years ago no member of the Old Company could sing one better than "Posh" Fletcher, Edward FitzGerald's fisherman friend, whom I once heard singing a rollicking song, the rest of the company joining vigorously in the refrain—

> "Don't forget your old shipmates;
> Don't forget your old shipmates;
> I 'ont forget my old shipmates—
> With a whack-fol-the-riddle-lol-the-ri-do."

That was one winter's night when, availing myself of the privilege of honorary membership of the Old Company, I had joined a party of sixty beachmen who were enjoying a "sing-song" in their shed. When I entered the low-roofed building I saw, through clouds of tobacco smoke, that a Trinity pilot was in the chair, and that the man who was shouting that he was "the Pirate of the Isles, his men were tried, and his bark was his pride," was a harmless and law-abiding lifeboatman. In the course of the evening we heard all about the wonderful adventures of "The Bold *Princess Royal*," a humorous vocalist, with a voice that cut like a saw, sang of "How Paddy cut the rope," and a well-known artist whose pictures annually adorned the line at the Royal Academy held the company spellbound while he declared that he was "the bosun tight, the midshipmite, and the crew of the captain's gig." Whatever the Aldeburgh beachmen of Crabbe's day may have been, the Lowestoft beachmen, so long as I have known them, have always been anything rather than a "surly savage race."

Lowestoft's oldest industry, its sea fishery, is still that for which it is most famous, and during every week of the year the scenes presented by its spacious docks, wharves, and fishmarkets abound in interest. A hundred years ago there were only about forty Lowestoft boats, each carrying a crew of ten or twelve men, regularly engaged in the herring fishery, and a local trawl fishery can hardly be said to have existed; now the Lowestoft fleet of steam and sailing drifters, or boats engaged in herring catching, is one of the finest in the world, and the local fleet of trawlers, consisting of both steamers and smacks, is an equally fine one. In 1907 no fewer than 529 drift-net fishing-boats and trawlers were registered at this port, and during the autumn herring fishing, which commences in September and is continued until a few days before Christmas, from four hundred to five hundred Scotch fishing-boats also have their headquarters here. In that season hundreds of fishing-boats spread their nets almost every night on the fishing grounds, and when they arrive in port the market is often covered with gleaming heaps of silvery herrings, all of which, in the course of a few hours, are bought by the merchants and curers, a considerable proportion of them being exported to the Continent, chiefly to Germany, Russia, Belgium, and Italy. In the packing and kippering of the herrings several hundred Scotch "kipper" girls are employed, and the presence of these "bonnie lassies," who are brought by special trains from the North, is an attractive feature of the town during the latter part of the year. Almost as soon as the herrings are landed, they are conveyed to the



SCOTCH "KIPPER" GIRLS AT LOWESTOFT.

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yards or sheds of the curers, where the girls, by the dexterous use of small knives with short, curved blades, prepare them for the process of kippering. Other herrings, not subjected to this splitting process, are suspended in curing sheds, and, after being smoked by the kindling of wood fires beneath them, are ready for sale as the familiar "bloaters"; while yet others, smoked and dried for longer periods, become the highly flavoured "reds" or high-dried herrings. In local estimation, however, no herring, in whatever way prepared for the table, can bear comparison with the so-called 'longshore herring, a small plump, delicately flavoured fish, captured in small quantities near the shore at the beginning of the season. This variety of herring, which is usually slightly cured and eaten fresh, is so highly appreciated by the local folk that few people outside the coast towns and villages get a chance to taste one. Nall, an historian of the East Coast herring fishery, says that in flavour the 'longshore herring "bears about the same relation to other herrings that Schloss Johannisberger and Chateau Margaux do to meaner vintages, and is just as accessible to the public at large." Midsummer herrings, which contain little or no roe, are also highly esteemed for their delicate flavour. It is an old saying, the truth of which no East Coast herring fisher will deny, that "of all the fish in the sea the herring is king."

The statements made in "Lenten Stuffe," Nashe's curious rhapsody on the herring, though made more than three hundred years ago, in many respects hold good to-day. "On no coast like ours," he writes, "is it caught in such an abundance, no where dressed in his right cue but

under our horizon; hosted, roasted, and toasted here alone it is, and as well powdered and salted as any Dutchman would desire. . . . The poorer sort make it three parts of their substance: with it, for his dinner, the patchedest leather pilche laboratho may dine like a Spanish Duke, when the niggardly mouse of beef will cost him sixpence. In the craft of catching, or taking, and smudging it, merchant chapmanably as it should be, it sets a-work thousands, who live all the rest of the year gaily well . . . carpenters, shipwrights, makers of lines, ropes and cables, dressers of hemp, spinners of thread, and net-weavers it gives their handfuls to . . . keeps in earnings the cooper, the brewer, the baker, and numbers of other people to gill, wash, and pack it, and carry it and recarry it."

The Lowestoft trawlers, both steamers and sailing vessels, fish all the year round, and almost every day in the year catches of soles, turbots, brills, dabs, plaice, cod, skate, and whiting are landed by them on the trawl market facing the South Pier. As these fish are what are known as demersal species, swimming and feeding at the bottom of the sea, the method of catching them differs from that employed in taking herring and mackerel, which swim and feed near the surface of the water. In the taking of demersal fish, the smacksmen use what is called a beam trawl, consisting of a triangular purse-like net, extended by means of a long wooden "beam," having at each end a stirrup-shaped iron frame called the "head." This heavily weighted net, which is attached to the smack by means of two ropes or "bridles" and a strong trawl rope or "warp," is dragged along the bottom of the sea, often sweeping up not only the recognised trawl fish but also

various unsaleable species and curious jetsam. The herring fishers not infrequently find fair-sized sharks in their drift nets—a fox shark, or "whale thresher," over 14 feet long was landed by one of the boats—and the trawlers sometimes have big surprises when the net is hauled on deck and its "cod end" is untied. Some years ago the crew of a Lowestoft smack were astonished to find a huge squid, or octopus, in their net—a monster which spread its long, snake-like tentacles in all directions and fixed its horrible suckers to the mast, the deck, and even the fishermen's heavy boots. The skipper of the smack afterwards declared that he thought at first he had brought up the "Old Gentleman himself," meaning his Satanic Majesty. It was not until the twining tentacles had all been cut off with a hatchet that the repulsive creature could be got clear of the net, and when the main portion or body of it was brought ashore and despatched to a museum it was found to be big enough to fill a fish barrel. This tale, like some other fish stories, will seem incredible to any one who has noticed the size of the largest cuttle-fish usually landed by the trawlers; but I can vouch for the truth of it, for I was on the trawl market when the remains of the monster were brought ashore. Another trawling tale, for the truth of which I cannot vouch, though I believe it to be true, relates how a Lowestoft skipper, when he hauled up his net, found in it the body of his brother, who had fallen overboard from another smack a few hours before.

Many years ago both trawling and drift-netting were confined to the coastal waters, there being a time when it was a rare occurrence for a herring-boat or a smack to fish outside what is now called

the territorial water margin, or three-mile limit. Fifty years ago, however, fishing was carried on in almost every part of the North Sea, and since then the fishing area has been considerably widened, some of the steam trawlers going round the Shetland Islands to the westward and as far north as the coast of Iceland and the Faeroe Islands. In consequence of this extended voyaging the trawlers have on hundreds of occasions served a purpose for which they were never intended and which has gained for them the name of the "lifeboats of the open sea." Not a winter passes without several of them bringing into port the crews of vessels found sinking or disabled far away from land, the rescue of such crews being often accomplished by deeds calling for the greatest courage and daring on the part of the fishermen. Time after time, when a storm has been raging, these brave and hardy fellows have put off from their smacks or steam trawlers in a cockle-shell boat in order to save the lives of the men on board some water-logged Norwegian barque or Russian schooner, and although beaten back again and again, they have striven against wind and wave until their dangerous errand of mercy has been accomplished. The performance of such deeds by the fishermen is rarely rewarded, but it has won for them an enviable fame for pluck and humanity. When the survivors of the lost German liner *Elbe*, after drifting about the North Sea all night in an open boat, sighted the Lowestoft trawler *Wildflower*, they recognised the nationality of the smack and said, "She is an English boat; she will not abandon us." Many other shipwrecked seamen, after giving up all hope of rescue, have owed their lives to the crew of an English smack.

CHAPTER VIII

YARMOUTH

"Thither, for this day free, gay parties go,
Their tea-house walk, their tippling rendezvous;
There humble couples sit in corner-bowers,
Or gaily ramble for th' allotted hours."

CRABBE.

THE main road from Lowestoft to Yarmouth runs almost parallel with the coast, but from half a mile to a mile distant from it, and as the land is flat, there is no sea view for the road traveller. The road crosses the eastern part of a district that, in consequence of its being bounded on the north, west, and south by estuarine Breydon, the river Waveney, Oulton Broad, and Lake Lothing, was formerly known as the Island of Lothingland. Westward of the road lie Fritton Lake and the village of Blundeston, while about midway between Lowestoft and Yarmouth the ruins of the old church at Hopton, which was destroyed by fire in 1865, can be seen a short distance from the road on the right and the new church, which has a stained-glass window designed by Sir E. Burne-Jones, adjoins the road on the left. Just beyond the bounds of Lowestoft Gunton Park is skirted, Gunton Church, a small building

with a round tower and a Late Norman doorway, being hidden by the trees bordering a narrow lane. The Old Hall, which adjoins the church, was formerly the home of Mr. J. D. Downes, whose favourite sport was falconry. He practised hawking in this neighbourhood, and during the time he occupied the Old Hall the nestlings of a pair of peregrine falcons, which bred in the tower of Corton Church, were regularly taken and trained to the chase, the clerk of the parish having a retaining fee for their preservation. In his declining years, when he was unable to participate in outdoor sports, Mr. Downes amused himself by watching a tame red-backed shrike catch flies in the room in which he sat.

A pleasant coast ramble from Lowestoft to Yarmouth can be taken by way of the Corton road, which skirts the tract of heathery land bordering the North, or Gunton, Denes. A short distance along this road the end of a cleft in the cliffs is passed, noteworthy for being the place where the clay or brick-earth was excavated which was used in the manufacture of the famous Lowestoft china. A little way beyond this point the village of Corton is reached, the lofty tower of its partly ruined church being a conspicuous landmark to seamen. Along its eastern side the village is safeguarded from sea encroachment by a substantial sea-wall and a series of groynes ; but to the north of the village, where the sea at flood tide often comes up to the base of the sandy cliffs, a good deal of land has been lost, including all but a very small portion of the parish of Newton, which formerly existed seaward of the present coast-line. From the border of the village a footpath runs along the top of the cliffs for a distance

of about 3¼ miles, terminating at the southern end of Gorleston promenade.

Gorleston is a rising watering-place that at first sight impresses one as being a typical example of those small modern coast resorts which owe their existence to the enterprise of the speculative builder. Its sea-front, with its zigzag cliff foot-paths, its ornamental shelters, its upper and lower esplanades, and its bandstand, is strikingly new, and its big hotel and monotonous terraces are especially indicative of recently attained popularity. There is, however, an older Gorleston, extending some distance along the western side of Yarmouth Harbour, and it is the picturesqueness of this riverside part of the town, together with the passing to and fro of ships and fishing-boats sailing in and out of the harbour, which gives the place a charm for many people for whom the ordinary sights and amusements of a seaside watering-place have little attraction. Not the tiniest of 'longshore fishing-boats can make its way up to Yarmouth unobserved by the loungers on the Gorleston pier and quays, who in consequence can enjoy almost all of the marine attractions of Yarmouth without being surrounded by the boisterous crowds and importunate mountebanks of the town across the river.

At Gorleston one can realise, better than anywhere along the East Anglian coast, what great changes have taken place in consequence of the creative and destructive agency of the sea, for here one has remarkable and incontrovertible evidence of them. Not many centuries before the conquest of England by the Normans no land existed where Yarmouth now stands, the site of the town being occupied by a portion of a

great estuary, the mouth of which extended from the high ground of Gorleston on the south to that of Caister on the north. Towards the close of the Saxon period a small islet formed at the mouth of this estuary, and on it a few fisher-folk settled, occupying themselves, in all probability, chiefly with herring fishing, as herrings then, and for some centuries afterwards, were netted in the estuary and landed at towns as far inland as Norwich and Beccles. Meanwhile the Norfolk coast, as far northward as Cromer, was being continually wasted by the sea, and the *débris* of its falling cliffs, carried southward by the sea currents, formed a long bar across the mouth of the Yarmouth estuary, from which in course of time the sea was almost entirely kept out. A narrow channel only, the mouth of the united rivers of the Broads district, remained open, and enabled Yarmouth to become a flourishing seaport; but for centuries the harbour mouth had no permanent location, being near Caister at the time of the Norman Conquest and as far southward of the town as Corton in the early part of the fourteenth century. Between 1346 and 1548 no fewer than six havens were constructed, each of which was in turn destroyed by the sea, and it was not until 1560 that the efforts of the townsfolk to make an indestructible harbour mouth were crowned with success. They then sought the aid of Joost Jansen, a Dutchman who, in his own country, had had experience in such work, and under his direction the labours of many centuries were finally rewarded. Manship, a Yarmouth historian, relates how at least a thousand men, women and children voluntarily assisted in the making of this haven, "some stand-



HARBOUR MOUTH, GORLESTON.

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ing in water up to the middle, others filling and carrying of buckets, the magistrates overseeing, with many of their brethren and others encouraging the people."

These facts help to explain the meaning of an old couplet one sometimes hears repeated on the west side of Yarmouth Harbour. It runs—

> "Gorleston was Gorleston ere Yarmouth begun,
> And will be Gorleston when Yarmouth be gone."

Another couplet, asserting that

> "Gorleston great will one day be,
> Yarmouth buried in the sea,"

suggests that in the opinion of some of the local folk the land that has risen out of the sea is likely to be submerged again.

Many big catches have been made by Yarmouth fishing-boats since the town first placed the tails of three herrings on its coat-of-arms; but curiously enough the biggest catch of all was made in the harbour opposite Gorleston on the 8th of June, 1891. On that day a full-grown lesser rorqual whale, measuring 30 feet in length and 8 feet in girth, after losing itself among the sand-banks lying off the coast, made its way into the harbour. Its arrival caused much excitement and some consternation; but it was not long before a whale hunt was organised, a number of the Gorleston lifeboatmen, with other valiant 'longshoremen, sallying forth to capture the great prize. For some time the harbour was the scene of an exciting chase, every incident of which was watched with intense interest by the crowds who lined the quays. The unfortunate whale was more

frantic than furious, and after damaging itself severely by dashing against a quayside it was driven into a kind of *cul-de-sac*, where it was attacked with boat-hooks and other weapons and eventually moored fast with ropes to the shore. In the course of an hour or two it succumbed to its injuries. It was then towed to the lifeboat shed and hauled ashore, being afterwards exhibited to a great number of people, some of whom made long journeys to see it. Then a local taxidermist took charge of the monster for a time, and when it had been satisfactorily stuffed and preserved, it was taken for a tour about the country, even journeying so far as the Royal Aquarium at Westminster, where it spent the winter. Afterwards it was brought back to Yarmouth, where, as "the Gorleston whale," it was for a long time an object of interest to visitors, and where, I believe, it can still be seen by any one who cares to pay it a visit.

There are various ways by which Yarmouth can be reached from Gorleston, including the railway, the electric tramway, and the little river steamers which ply up and down the picturesque harbour; but as I am a leisurely traveller, and often glad to loiter, I usually follow in the wake of Mr. Barkis, the Blunderstone carrier, and saunter into the town by way of Southtown Road. Like David Copperfield, I may not be favourably impressed by the aspect the town presents when approached from this direction; but the glimpses one gets of the harbour between the huge timber stacks which line the shore, promise better things on closer acquaintance, and even the long and somewhat dreary Southtown Road is not without interesting associations. For in a fine old house

that stood on the left side of the road dwelt Mrs. Bridget Bendish, the daughter of General Ireton and the granddaughter of Oliver Cromwell. This strong-minded and rather eccentric lady is said to have resembled Cromwell more nearly than any other of his descendants, both in cast of countenance and in character. Grainger says of her that during her life in Yarmouth she sometimes appeared with all the dignity of a princess and at other times she had the look of a "low drudge of business," being as hard-working as she was intelligent in the management of her local salt works. She was careless how or where she slept or what she ate or drank; but after a day of drudgery she would sometimes attend a Yarmouth assembly and attract general attention by the greatness of her manner and the superiority of her understanding. "She was never known to break a promise, nor in her common conversation to pay much regard to truth, and it would have been rashness to have affirmed anything as a fact because she said it. Her charity appeared to be a virtue of the heart as well as the hand. She exercised it in all places, and on every occasion; but in the exertion of it she frequently left her debts unpaid. . . . She would frequently fawn, dissemble, and prevaricate, and that for low, if not sinister ends and purposes; and was, indeed, the jest and admiration, not only of her friends, but even of her servants, who justly regarded her as one of the best mistresses in the world. She had the highest veneration for the memory of her grandfather, whom she reverenced as a consummate hero, and glorified saint." This remarkable lady, who seems to have quite overshadowed her husband, the son of one of the

Protector's leading Yarmouth supporters, died in 1726, and is buried in St. Nicholas Church.

From the bridge that connects Southtown with Yarmouth one gets on the right a fine view of the North Quay and the shipping in the harbour, while on the left the ooze flats of Breydon, the shrunken estuary of the Broadland rivers, can be seen beyond a railway bridge. Bordering the quay and a large open space called Hall Quay are some of the oldest and most interesting houses in the town, noteworthy among them being the Star Hotel, a lofty Elizabethan flint-faced house, built by William Crowe, a "merchant adventurer" of those "spacious times" when, as Froude says, our English seamen "went out across the unknown seas, fighting, discovering, colonising, and graved out the channels . . . through which the commerce and enterprise of England has flowed out over all the world." That William Crowe, although no sailor, had an interest in the somewhat piratical adventures of the Elizabethan voyagers is evident; for he belonged to the Company of so-called Spanish Merchants, and when he built for himself this fine old house he placed the arms of that Company over the fireplace of its principal room. That room is now known as the Nelson Room. Whether, as is asserted, the death-warrant of Charles I. was signed in it and Lord Nelson occupied it when he landed at Yarmouth after fighting and winning the Battle of the Nile matters little; for it is interesting enough without historical associations. It is lined throughout with oak panelling, now black with age, the upper panels being enclosed in richly carved arches and divided by figures on the pedestals of fluted pilasters. Above is a beautifully moulded cornice,

and the ceiling is of elaborate design and exquisite detail. A few years ago the original chimney-piece was discovered boarded over with modern woodwork, and with the fine Dutch tiles below it is one of the most interesting features of this grand old room, others being a portrait in oils of the naval hero whose name it bears and a facsimile of the warrant for King Charles's execution. On the ground floor the great hall remains and has a fine ceiling and two of its original windows. Underground there is quite a labyrinth of dark passages and cellars, the walls of one vault being covered with almost indecipherable bills, announcing the times of departure of long-forgotten coaches.

A sixteenth-century royal commissioner who visited Yarmouth described it as being "as pratye a town as I know of on the sea costes . . . the best buylded, with most supstancyall houses, that I know so near the sea, in all your Majestie's realme," and Dr. Alexander Carlyle, in his "Autobiography," speaks of the quay as being "the most remarkable thing about the town" and bordered by the handsomest houses. Many of these houses, which were the homes of wealthy merchants, are converted into public buildings and offices; but some of them have in their carved mantelpieces and decorated ceilings relics of their original magnificence. Traces of Dutch influence, resulting from centuries of intercommunication between Yarmouth and the ports of Holland, as well as from the settlement of Dutch refugees in the town, were also manifest in the styles of building and ornamenting some of these ancient houses; but, as an old writer says, "the long alienation between Yarmouth and Rotterdam, occasioned originally

by the French Revolution, went far to sweep away the porches attached to the doors; those comfortable summer evening lounges, in which the father dreamed over his pipe, while his family sat round him, chatting with and of the passers-by. Together with the porches disappeared likewise the flat-topped limes, with the Dutch clinkers and the posts and chains in front, the mirrors, justly denominated 'espions,' that projected from the open windows, the merchant-marks, and, in great measure, the hooks on the walls for the suspension of tapestry." Still, the long wide quay, of which the Yarmouth folk are justly proud, is one of the few parts of the town to which the atmosphere of its past seems to cling, reminiscent of maritime adventure, romance, and enterprise.

In the early days of Yarmouth's prosperity, when it had become famous for its herring fishery, so that great numbers of the "fishermen of France, Flanders, and of Holland, Zealand, and of all the Low Countries" resorted to it yearly "from the feast of St. Michael the archangel until the feast of St. Martin," all of them being concerned in "the taking, selling and buying of herrings," there were frequent disputes between Yarmouth men and the Cinque Ports, to which an extensive jurisdiction was granted by a charter of the reign of Edward I. Just as the Lowestoft fishermen and fishing-boat owners resented the interference of the Yarmouth authorities, who had similar jurisdiction over several miles of the coast, so the Yarmouth men resented having their affairs inquired into and controlled by the Cinque Ports' bailiffs, and the visits of the bailiffs were the occasion of considerable ill-feeling and strife.

The Barons of the Cinque Ports maintained that their interference was necessary to keep order, "divers differences and stir" arising during the fishing season "for want of a settled order" in the town; but the East Coast folk, then, as now, firmly convinced that they were more capable of managing their own affairs than any "foreigner" could be, gave the bailiffs a warmer reception than they looked for, one unfortunate man being killed whilst carrying out his duties in the town. Finding that ill-treating the bailiffs failed to bring about a moderation of the galling restrictions under which they were placed, the Yarmouth men carried the war into the enemy's camp. We find that in 1281 the town was fined £1,000 on account of its fishermen having done divers damages and trespasses to the Cinque Ports, and when ships belonging to the rival ports met on the open sea fighting between their respective crews generally ensued. Especially was this the case in 1303, when quite a naval battle was fought between the Yarmouth and the Cinque Ports men, the former losing twenty-five ships, or, according to another account, having thirty-seven ships badly damaged and a loss of £15,000 inflicted upon them. No steps were taken, however, to free Yarmouth from the Cinque Ports until the latter had fallen into decay, and then it was at the request of the Barons themselves that they were "discharged of the great cost and fruitless service of their bailiffs to Yarmouth."

Yarmouth is to-day of no importance as a naval station, and the occasional visit of a fleet of battleships to its roadstead is an event calling for the running of excursion trains from inland towns for

miles around; but in the fourteenth century the naval power of Yarmouth was greater than that of any other English port, not even excepting London. Its "men-of-war," as they were called, were in all probability trading and fishing vessels temporarily fitted up for sea-fighting; consequently its naval importance must have been mainly due to its flourishing fisheries. In 1340, when Edward III. won the Battle of the Swin off the Dutch coast, the English fleet, which included fifty-two Yarmouth ships, was commanded by John Perebrown, a Yarmouth man, and the king was so proud of Perebrown's victory that he ordered a new coinage to be struck, bearing an effigy of himself, in the middle of a ship, carrying a shield with the arms of England and France. A few years later he had less reason to be pleased with the conduct of the men who manned the Yarmouth ships; for after they had landed him on the coast of Brittany they fled from the French fleet, leaving him in a position of considerable danger. With the assistance of the Pope, he managed to make a truce with France and return safely to England, where he at once summoned the owners, captains, and crews of the Yarmouth ships to "answer for their contemptibly deserting him, leaving other our faithful subjects there (in France) with us in danger of our lives." Apparently they escaped punishment, and a recent historian* concludes that they were able to satisfy the king that on this occasion discretion was the better part of valour. Five years later they were again fighting for him at the siege of Calais, in which seven hundred English ships and 14,151 seamen, in-

* Mr. F. D. Longe in "Lowestoft in Olden Times," p. 31.

cluding forty-three Yarmouth vessels and 1,075 Yarmouth men, were engaged.

Two years afterwards an epidemic of plague, which in twelve months carried off 7,052 people in Yarmouth alone, struck a terrible blow at the prosperity of the town—a blow from the effects of which it did not recover for many years. Not until nearly two centuries have elapsed do we hear of any further important success having attended the Yarmouth "men-of-war," and then the capture of two French ships and 120 prisoners proved that the town could still perform its part in the defence of the realm. In 1628, when the Marquis of Hamilton raised a force of six thousand men to act with him as their general under Gustavus Adolphus, the "Lion of the North," Yarmouth was the port from which this strong contingent sailed for Germany. Towards the end of the seventeenth century the North Sea fleet seems to have spent much of its time in the Yarmouth roadstead, for it was there in June and September, 1796, and again in June, 1797, when a mutiny broke out on board the ships, several of which "hoisted the red flag of defiance." A few months later Admiral Duncan took command of this fleet, which on October 3rd sailed from Yarmouth and two days later defeated the Dutch fleet off Camperdown, afterwards returning here with seven of the enemy's ships as prizes. On the 6th of November, 1800, Lord Nelson landed here after winning the Battle of the Nile, and on March 12th of the following year forty-seven ships of war, commanded by Lord Nelson and Admiral Sir Hyde Parker, sailed from Yarmouth for Copenhagen. On April 14th news was received of the destruction of the Danish fleet, and before the end of the year Nelson again landed on

Yarmouth Jetty, having returned home in the gun-brig *Kite*. Just before this, a sad naval disaster occurred near Yarmouth, the *Invincible*, 74 guns, striking on the dreaded Hasboro' Sands and foundering with her captain, several officers, and three hundred men. Rear-Admiral Totty was on board her, but was saved, with seven officers and about 190 of the crew, by the exertions of the master of a local cod-smack. During a violent storm that broke upon the coast, the gun-brig *Snipe* was wrecked near the mouth of the harbour, upwards of sixty lives being lost. The sight of so many seamen drowning within a short distance of the shore so impressed Captain G. W. Manby, who was then barrack-master at Yarmouth, that he set about inventing a life-saving apparatus, by means of which communication could be established between a stranded vessel and the land. Within twelve months of the conception of this plan, the inventor was able to demonstrate its utility by using it to rescue the crew of the Plymouth brig *Elizabeth*, which stranded about 150 yards from the beach, and during the ensuing eight years his apparatus was placed on fifty-nine stations along the English coast. He was awarded by Parliament grants amounting to £6,700, and before he died he had the satisfaction of knowing that his life-saving invention had been the means of saving over a thousand lives.

Yarmouth's herring fishery, which has been carried on for nearly a thousand years, is of greater importance to-day than it has ever been. In 1907 the number of Yarmouth boats engaged in it numbered 214, of which 119 were steamers ; but in the autumn some six hundred Scotch boats also have their headquarters here, and in good seasons

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A YARMOUTH DRIFTER.

[*To face p.* 152.

enormous quantities of fish are landed. During 1905 upwards of three million hundredweights of herrings were brought into the thirteen principal herring-fishing ports, and to this immense total Yarmouth contributed no fewer than 1,272,000 cwts.; while in 1906, when 3,278,289 cwts. were landed on the British coast, 1,169,630 cwts. were brought into Yarmouth. As is the case at Lowestoft, the herring fishery provides employment for thousands of people besides the fishermen, and a busier scene than the harbour and the fishmarket present when the fishing is at its height can hardly be imagined. When the harbour is so thronged with fishing-boats that it is almost possible to cross on their decks from shore to shore, one is reminded of an old account of the Yarmouth herring fishery, printed in 1614 by "Tobias Gentleman, fisherman and mariner." "This town," he wrote, "is a place of great resort of all the herring fishermen of England; for thither do resort all the fishermen of the Cinque Ports, and all the rest of the West-countrymen of England, as far as Bridport and Lime in Dorsetshire: and those herrings that they take, they do not barrel, because their boats are but small things, but they sell all unto the Yarmouth herring buyers for ready money: and also the fishermen of the North countries beyond Scarborough, and Robin Hood's Bay, and some as far as the bishoprick of Durham, do thither resort yearly, in poor little boats, called five-men-cobbles; and all the herrings that they take, they sell fresh unto the Yarmouth men to make red herrings. Also to Yarmouth do daily come into the haven up to the key, all, or the most part of the great fleet of Hollanders . . . that go in the sword-pinks,

Holland-toads, crab-skuits, walnut-shells, and great and small yeures, one hundred and two hundred sail together, and all their herrings that they do bring in, they sell them all for ready money to the Yarmouth men: and also the Frenchmen of Picardy and Normandy, some hundred sail of them at a time, do come thither, and all the herrings they catch they sell fresh unto these herring-mongers at Yarmouth for ready gold." Daniel Defoe, who, some 110 years later, was present at a Yarmouth "herring fair," has left us a similar description of the scene then to be witnessed.

Nall, in his history of the herring fishery, has collected much interesting and curious information about the methods and customs of the old-time herring fishers. From him we learn that in 1641 Yarmouth petitioned Parliament to enforce a better observance of "fish days," and again in 1664 "to have Lent for the time to come strictly kept and observed." At that time a favourite toast of the Yarmouth and Lowestoft fishermen was—

> "Here's to his Holiness, the Pope, with his triple crown,
> With nine dollars each, for each cask in the town."

As some return for benefits received, a share of the earnings of each boat, known as "Christ's half dole," was paid to the rector of the parish, though this was an enforced payment, made in lieu of the tithe of fish. By a bye-law made in 1484, another share, known as the "town's half dole," was assigned to the maintenance of the pier and haven. Years ago, when the herring-boats were leaving the harbour for the fishing grounds the Yarmouth

boys used to accompany them along the haven's side, singing—

"Herrings galore!
Pray Master,
Gay Master,
Luff the little herring boat ashore.
Pray God send you eight or nine last—
Fair gains all,
Good weather,
Good weather,
All herrings—no dogs (dogfish)."

The crew of a boat were expected to acknowledge these good wishes by throwing biscuits to the singers.

The fishermen of to-day, most of whom have been to Board Schools, know very little of the curious folk-lore with which their fathers and grandfathers were familiar, and of which some fragments may be gathered up by one who spends some time in the company of the old men whose fishing days are over. From them you may learn that if you wish to get a good idea of the outlines of a drifter's deck you need only look at the crown of a herring's head, where you will see them clearly represented, while on each side of the head, on the herring's "cheeks," so to speak, you will see a "picture" of a fishing-boat with its mast lowered, just as it is when engaged in fishing. To solve the problem of how men first got the idea of using nets, you must examine the sides of a scaled fresh herring, where you will find the meshes of a net clearly marked. Among the herrings in a shoal, you will learn, there are "kings" whose "lead" is followed by the shoal in its migrations: these "kings" are easily recognised by their bright red fins. Occasionally they are caught in the nets, in

which case the fishermen, according to Mr. J. W. de Caux, who has had exceptional opportunities for inquiring into these matters, generally endeavour to return them alive to the water, but not until they have been "passed round the scudding-pole as many times as the fishermen desire to get lasts of herrings at their next haul." When a lad goes to sea on a herring-boat or a trawler, he generally does so in the capacity of cook, his duties being to keep the cabin fire alight and prepare meals for the crew. During the first day or two he is usually in no fit state to attend to these duties, so they are not expected of him; but the skipper looks for him to be "up and doing" on the third day. Hence has arisen the saying, "The first day is pudding, the next is pie, and the next you get to work as well as I." Nall tells us that the Dutch fishermen have a high opinion of the herring's medicinal properties, as is indicated by their saying, "Herrings in the land, the doctor at a stand." A century and a half ago, "herring plasters" were prescribed for fevers, while steeped in tar the herring was considered beneficial to cattle suffering from murrain. Until quite recently a red herring was looked upon as a sovereign remedy for dyspeptic cows—that is to say, cows that had lost the power of chewing the cud. "Don't cry herrings till they're in the net" is a Flemish version of our "Never count your chickens before they are hatched," and the Scotchman's "Dinna gut your herrings till you get them." "Let every herring hang by its own head" is a saying that evidently originated in a curing shed.

At Yarmouth, as at Lowestoft, there is a colony of beachmen, and one or two of the old beach

companies are still in existence. Formerly there were no fewer than seven rival companies, known respectively as the Holkham, Standard, Young, Diamond, Roberts', Star, and Denny's, having a total membership of about 180 men. A member of one of these companies was Samuel Brock, who, with nine other beachmen, on the 6th of October, 1835, went off in a yawl to the assistance of a Spanish ship in distress about 12 miles eastward of the town. On reaching the ship, four of the beachmen went on board to help to man the pumps, and the yawl then commenced her return journey. When she was about 6 miles from the shore a sudden squall capsized her, and all of her crew were drowned save Brock, who succeeded in casting off most of his clothes and, being a good swimmer, struck out for the land. For some time he was encumbered by his heavy boots; but these he eventually got rid of, and after swimming for five hours he succeeded in reaching the St. Nicholas Gat buoy, which was nearly opposite, but about 4 miles distant from, his own door. There he rested for a time, but realising that if he stayed there he would soon become helpless through cold, he let go his hold of the buoy and again swam towards the land. A strong current carried him southward, and the seagulls gathered about him, mistaking him for a floating corpse. About half-past one in the morning, when he had been in the water seven and a half hours, he drew near to the collier *Betsy*, which was at anchor in Corton Roads, and having attracted the attention of her crew he was taken on board. A large sum of money was raised for the benefit of the widows and orphans of the drowned beachmen, and of this sum it was proposed that the plucky survivor should have

a share; but he refused to receive a penny of it.

A long day can be profitably spent in rambling about the main streets and byways of Yarmouth, for the old town, despite its modern "improvements" and its popular attractions for trippers, has many nooks and corners upon which the hand of the "improver" has lain lightly and where there are ancient buildings remaining to tell something of the story of other days. True, the market-place, where the stalls of the vendors of all kinds of merchandise remind one of those in an old English fair, is no longer overlooked by those fine old houses of the merchant princes for which it was formerly renowned; but the Fishermen's Almshouse, with its ornamented gables and quaint little cupola, preserves its original picturesqueness, and just beyond it is St. Nicholas Church, founded by Herbert de Lozinga, Bishop of Norwich, and covering an area nearly equal to that of Rochester Cathedral. Of monastic remains there are few to be seen, nor is this surprising, seeing that so long ago as 1722 it was complained that the great defect of the town was its lack of ground for building purposes; but the refectory of a Benedictine priory, now used as a school, adjoins the south side of the churchyard. Fragments of the old town wall are still standing, the most noteworthy being a tower in Blackfriars Street, known as Blackfriars Tower; but the north and south gates, which were in existence at the beginning of the last century, have been pulled down. Old prints show the west tower of the south gate surmounted by a curious signalling apparatus, which was the end of a line of communication with Norwich, maintained at the expense of the merchants of

Yarmouth, and therefore called the Commercial Telegraph. In 1807 an order despatched from the Admiralty Office in London was received at Yarmouth in seventeen minutes.

A topographical writer who described Yarmouth as it was about twelve years ago referred to the interior of the parish church as being pre-eminently a show-place. "Curiosities framed and labelled hang on its walls," he writes, "glass cases are not infrequent, and a progress round the church is suggestive of a visit to a rather scantily furnished museum." Among these curiosities is the basal portion of the skull of a sperm whale, known as the "Devil's Seat," a relic of the days when Yarmouth sent ships to the whale fishery. It has been urged that such things are attractive to visitors, whose donations towards the funds of the church are very acceptable; but as the donations were small, notwithstanding that great numbers of strangers annually visited the church, the enterprising authorities now charge sixpence to every visitor who wishes to examine the interior of the building. In case some reader may imagine that the whale's skull and the other curiosities are preserved in the church because there is no other place where they can be suitably exhibited, I hasten to state that Yarmouth possesses a small but interesting museum, which is attached to the old Tolhouse, in Middlegate Street, one of the best-preserved and most picturesque fourteenth-century buildings to be found in England.

It is useless to search the South Denes in the hope of discovering Peggotty's Hut, for the quaint boat-roofed structure which went by that name has disappeared; but the narrow lanes

called "rows," owing to the number of which Dickens described Yarmouth as "the Norfolk Gridiron," are likely to be a striking feature of the town for many years to come. Less open than the Lowestoft "scores" to the sea breezes, these rows, which know little of the sunlight, are, with one or two exceptions, such places that a visitor, after examining one of them, is usually content to leave the remainder unexplored. There are considerably more than a hundred of them, and they are supposed to have come into existence in consequence of the limited space the builders of ancient Yarmouth had at their disposal. Most of them are paved, either with ordinary flagstones or with beach stones, and where they are bordered by old houses with projecting upper storeys and dormer windows they are picturesque enough to attract the eye of an artist. Here and there the houses facing each other are so close that their respective inmates, by leaning out of the windows, can shake hands across a row; while in places an upper storey of a building extends quite across a row, converting the passage-way into a kind of tunnel. Some of these old houses were occupied by well-to-do merchants of the town; but at the present time many of them are used as warehouses. Until the early part of the last century, when all the rows were numbered, they were usually distinguished by the name of some person who dwelt in them; but the name of "Helle Row," by which one of them was known so long ago as the reign of Edward III., is strikingly suggestive of trouble in that particular alley, while Kitty-witches Row, now No. 95, is said to have been inhabited by some lively ladies called "kitty-witches," who dressed themselves in a

grotesque fashion and went from house to house, at certain times of the year, begging alms of the householders. In 1598 the town possessed as many as 140 rows, and it was probably owing to so many people being herded together in such close quarters that the plague spread rapidly in the town and carried off many victims.

It was for trading in these rows that a peculiar kind of cart, called a "trolly-cart," was invented. This cart was about 12 feet long by 3 feet 6 inches wide; it had wheels 2 feet 9 inches in height, and was drawn by a single horse, the driver standing on the cross staves. Such vehicles appear to have been first used in the reign of Henry VIII., when they were called "Harry carriers," and there were frequent complaints about the damage they did in passing up and down the narrow rows. The only Yarmouth trolly-cart now in existence can be seen in the Tolhouse Museum. No one who examines it will imagine that such curious vehicles were used for pleasure excursions, yet we are told that in the eighteenth century, and especially during the bathing season, "a number of these vehicles, which the people of Yarmouth dignify by the name of coaches," were let out to visitors who wished to make a trip into the country or take an airing on the denes. "The carriages for this purpose," writes the author of the "Norfolk Tour (1795)," "are generally painted red, green, or blue, and may be had for a few hours for two shillings, horse and driver included. The horses used here are remarkably good trotters; but from the uncouth construction of the carriage, they seem to go thundering and blundering down the narrow rows, which the carts so exactly fit as not to be overturned, and along the streets, in a

very disagreeable manner. Upon the whole, the Yarmouth cart-coach is the most convenient, useful, and whimsical carriage used in the kingdom."

When one turns away from the quay, the market-place, the picturesque old Tolhouse, and the rows, and goes down to the sea-front, one becomes acquainted with an aspect of Yarmouth very different from that which is suggested by the relics of the town's past; for Yarmouth beach, together with the spacious Drive, the Winter Gardens, and the fine piers, is yearly the resort of thousands upon thousands of those English holiday-makers whose ways of enjoying themselves directly contradict the foreigner's taunt that we take our pleasures sadly. Here, where "all the fun of the fair" can be shared in at a trifling cost while you are breathing the sea breezes, you take your choice of variety concerts and cinematograph shows, ride on a switchback or a bicycle railway, "chute the chute," ascend a lofty revolving tower, listen to the screeching of tinny gramophones, put pennies in innumerable slots, and by simply putting your head through a hole in a screen obtain for the delight of your friends a portrait of yourself in bathing costume or riding in a motor-car. For a few pence a learned professor—of phrenology—will tell you how you may attain to fame and fortune, while by expending an even smaller sum you may secure an abundant supply of that "electricity" which is "life." Swarthy, dark-eyed gypsies, arrayed in much-befeathered hats and brilliant plaid shawls, will tell your fortune and describe the "beautiful lady" or the "dark young man" who is to "cross your path," or should you prefer

it, you may learn just what is in store for you by having a slip of paper picked up for you by a "love bird." For Yarmouth is a place to which nearly every kind of charlatan and mountebank resorts, and where every kind of popular amusement is provided. In whatever direction you turn you find some one waiting to amuse you, and incidentally to extract from you a small portion of your superfluous cash; and should you be amiable and willing to be amused you may spend here the most exhausting of holidays, and this without participating in one-half of the seaside's abounding delights. If the pleasures of the pier and beach should pall upon you, innumerable cabmen, brake-drivers, and steamboat agents will be ready to reveal to you the charms of Ormesby Broad, Fritton Lake, or Burgh Castle, and in taking leave of this giddy whirl of gaiety you may carry away with you choice specimens selected from the most varied assortment of humorous picture-postcards to be found in the land.

It is pleasant to see how whole-heartedly the average holiday-maker at Yarmouth enters into the various amusements the beach affords; but a coast rambler for whom the rugged cliff, the desolate salt marsh, and the tawny dune have greater attraction than the crowded seashore of the Blackpool of the East Coast may be forgiven if he withdraw from the crowd that covers all the sea-front between the Britannia Pier and the Winter Gardens and seek the comparative solitude of the South Denes beyond the Nelson Monument, or of the North Denes that lie between the town and the coast village of Caister. For the attractions of the Denes, and especially

of the North Denes, are of that quiet kind which appeal not only to the botanist in search of specimens of the seaside flora, but also to him who is content to lie on his back on the sloping side of a sand-hill and watch the waves breaking upon the shore, the ringed plover feeding amid the stranded sea-wrack, and the needle-like points of the maram grass drawing half-circles on the wind-smoothed sand. These Denes are not what they once were, for the builder has encroached upon them, and many of the wild birds that formerly nested on them have abandoned them; but they still wear some shreds of their primitive vesture of saline herbage, and there is yet space for the fishermen to dry their nets on them as they did in days of yore. This privilege of using the Denes for net-drying has been jealously guarded by the fishermen for many centuries. In the reign of Edward I., when a charter was granted by which the erection of several windmills on the Denes was permitted, it was particularly stipulated that the mills should "be built to the least damage and nuisance of the Dene, and of those who shall dry their nets there." Strangely enough, considering the injury they might do to the nets, cattle were allowed to graze on these seashore tracts of scantily grassed sward and dune.

In the opinion of naturalists no place in the neighbourhood of Yarmouth can bear comparison with Breydon, that ooze-bordered expanse of tidal water which is all that is left of the great estuary that once filled the lower part of the valleys of the Broads district. We had a glimpse of it as we entered the town by way of the haven bridge; but to gain some idea of its extent and wild life

you should hire a boat at one of the boatyards above the bridge or, better still, persuade some Breydon smelt-fisher or eel-picker to find room for you in his boat when he is about to sail up the estuary. Then only a few minutes will elapse before all thoughts of Yarmouth and its crowded beach and streets are driven from the mind by an influx of new impressions made by strange surroundings. Beyond the railway bridge that spans the lower end of Breydon everything about the estuary seems primitive and almost primeval, while the company of a Breydoner—as a fisherman who regularly resorts to Breydon is called—is not likely to dispel the illusion. So low are the shores of this estuary that when the tide is "up" the water seems to extend almost to the horizon, and on misty days, when not only the banks but the bordering marshlands are invisible to people afloat on the navigable channel, this tidal water seems to be limitless. When the tide is at ebb, wide tracts of gleaming ooze, here and there covered with masses of ribbon-like shore-weed, border the channel on either side, and to these mud-flats the sea-gulls and shore-birds come to feed for hours together.

At the upper end of Breydon a number of smelt-fishers have their headquarters in some ramshackle little houseboats moored or aground at the junction of the Yare and Waveney; scattered along the north shore are a few similar houseboats, one or two of which are occupied at intervals by punt-gunners. Of such gunners there was formerly a goodly fraternity here, and in the days when there were no such things as bird protection and close seasons they made some wonderful bags of wild-fowl and secured many

rare and valuable birds. In Mr. A. H. Patterson these hardy Breydoners have recently found an able biographer, who has recounted many of their stories of the days when the flats "were often white with fowl"; but they were, I believe, first mentioned by the brothers C. J. and Sir James Paget, who in 1834 published a "Sketch of the Natural History of Great Yarmouth." Referring to Breydon, the Pagets said that "even in the severest winters it is seldom so completely frozen as not still to afford . . . a sufficiency of provision for the fowl; and it is in such seasons that the greatest numbers are secured. . . . The gunner may, in his flat-bottomed boat, approach within a comparatively short distance of them by means of channels made in the flats, and with a single discharge of his gun, which moves on a swivel in the midships of his boat, effect a most extraordinary slaughter." As an instance of the luck of some of these old-time gunners there is quoted the experience of an old man named Thomas, "who one morning, on awakening in his boat on the flats, saw not far from him a number of wild-fowl sitting in a crowd close together on the ice. From his boat being nearly covered with snow, he had escaped their observation while they were collecting in the night. He immediately fired (his gun carrying about a pound of shot), and with those killed outright and the wounded, which he and his dog caught before they could make their escape, he secured no less than thirty couple of wild-fowl, consisting principally of wigeon and teal."

Several sportsmen, like the late E. T. Booth and the late Fielding Harmer, also had some wonderful sport on Breydon in the days when the fowl were

less disturbed by railways and steamers than they are to-day. In Mr. Booth's well-known collection of birds there are several specimens shot by himself on the estuary or in its neighbourhood, and on no other British estuary have so many species been obtained which were new to the British bird lists. Among them have been the red-crested pochard, broad-billed and pectoral sandpipers, the Mediterranean black-headed gull and the Mediterranean herring gull, while other avine rarities shot on Breydon have been white and black storks, pratincoles, Siberian pectoral sandpipers, buff-breasted sandpipers, and gull-billed and Caspian terns. During the last few years considerably more than a hundred spoonbills have been seen, generally in late spring and early summer, on the Breydon flats; but thanks to the vigilance of the paid watcher, whose houseboat is moored on the estuary during the close season, these beautiful birds, with many other rare migrants and accidental visitors, have escaped destruction. Some three hundred years ago the spoonbill used to nest on the border of the marshes not far from Breydon; but it became extinct here as a breeding species, probably because, as Sir Thomas Browne says, it was shot, not for its "meat," but for its "handsomeness." Sanguine ornithologists have suggested the likelihood of its re-establishing itself in its old haunts now that protection is afforded it; but at present it shows no disposition to do so, and in view of the fact that its interests are safeguarded on some of the Dutch meres it will probably be content to breed in Holland rather than attempt to do so in England.

A somewhat remarkable fact in connection with the bird life of Breydon is the disappearance of the

cormorants that were once so plentiful on and around the estuary. In the seventeenth century there was a colony of these birds at Reedham, "from whence King Charles the First was wont to be supplied," and during the latter half of the eighteenth century they were so numerous at Fritton Lake, a few miles from Breydon, that thousands of them used to roost every night in the trees around the lake. Lubbock, in his "Fauna of Norfolk," mentions that as late as 1825 there were many nests in the neighbourhood of the lake—according to one account the birds occupied old herons' nests—but shortly afterwards the cormorants seem to have abandoned East Norfolk altogether. Nor have they ever returned to stay here, though occasionally a few birds pay a passing visit to the estuary, and may be seen diving for fish from the top of the channel posts. There are many parts of the coast where the departure of the voracious cormorant would be considered a blessing, especially by the 'longshore fishermen, and probably the Breydon smelt-fishers are quite content that the estuary should be without them; but although they are not greatly missed, the reason why they forsook their old haunts is not evident, there being no lack of such fish as would provide them with plenty of food. One can easily account for the disappearance of the avocets, black terns, godwits, bitterns, and some other species that used to breed in the marshes of East Norfolk; but that the cormorant should be numbered among Norfolk's lost breeding birds is a fact not satisfactorily explained.

To-day there are only one or two professional punt-gunners to be seen on Breydon, and in consequence of the close season they are compelled

to seek other employment than wild-fowling during several months of the year. The typical Breydoner of to-day is the smelt-fisher, whose acquaintance can best be made in the neighbourhood of the marsh inn at Berney Arms; and at the inn, or in the cramped tarred houseboats on the opposite side of the river, the smelters foregather when the tide is "slack," and they are usually ready to "talk Breydon" with a stranger who comes their way. They agree that as a resort of wild-fowl the estuary has seen its best days, but so far as smelt-fishing is concerned they have little to complain of, the smelts, notwithstanding the silting up of the channels and the spreading of the mud flats, being as plentiful now as they have ever been; indeed, some of the best catches on record have been made during the last few years.

No one with antiquarian tastes should visit Breydon without seeing Burgh Castle, one of the best-preserved specimens of a Roman *castellum* to be seen in England. This massive fortress, the *Garianonum* of the Romans, stands on fairly high ground overlooking the confluence of the Yare and Waveney. It consists of massive walls 14 feet in height and 9 feet thick, built of flint and brick, and enclosing three sides of a rectangular space measuring 640 feet by 370 feet. The entrance is on the east side, where there are also four solid round towers. John Ives, F.R.S., of Yarmouth, who more than a century ago published a lengthy description of this grand ruin, said: "There are few remains of Roman buildings in Britain so considerable for preservation and yet so little noticed by writers as the ancient Garianonum. . . . While Richborough is celebrated by a Battely, this rival station, equal in antiquity, has met

with no historian." In the early part of the seventh century the Irish monk Fursey, one of the earliest preachers of Christianity in East Anglia, had a cell within the walls of this *castellum*, and it was here that he had those remarkable visions which, it has been suggested, gave origin to Dante's "Divina Comedia."

CHAPTER IX

YARMOUTH TO HAPPISBURGH

"Here, far off in the farther extreme of the shore as it lengthens
Northward, lonely for miles, ere ever a village begin,
On the lapsing land that recedes as the growth of the strong sea strengthens
Shoreward, thrusting further and further its outworks in."

A. C. SWINBURNE.

SUBURBAN scenery is rarely beautiful, and that of the road from Yarmouth to Caister is only relieved from utter dismalness by glimpses of the sand-hills on the one hand and the wide, mill-dotted marshlands of the Bure on the other. Forty years ago, when there was no railway across Yarmouth North Denes, and almost the only buildings between the Britannia Pier and Caister were some old windmills, there were few pleasanter places for a summer-day ramble than the wilderness of gorse, maram-grass, and sand-sedge which extended from the roadside to the beach; but popular, prosperous Yarmouth has changed all that by substituting bricks for furze-bushes, and one must get well on the way to Caister before one can feel the freedom of the "open road" again. Southey, who stayed for a while in a village a few miles from Yarmouth, wrote that: "This part of England looks as if

Nature had wearied herself with adorning the rest with hill and dale, and squatted down here to rest herself."

Apart from the church memorials to Sarah Martin the prison visitor, and to brave lifeboatmen who lost their lives while attempting to save those of shipwrecked seamen, there is little to see in Caister village; but Caister Castle claims the attention of every topographer who describes the Norfolk coast. This so-called castle was in reality a magnificent example of the fortified manor-house of the fifteenth century. It was built, between 1443 and 1453, by Sir John Fastolff, and William of Worcester, who was Fastolff's secretary, described it as "a rich jewel, at need for all the country in time of need. My master, Fastolff," he added, when he heard that the Duke of Norfolk had claimed it, "would rather he had never builded it than it should be in the governance of any sovereign that will oppress the country." It was a quadrangular moated house, of which the principal remaining portions are the greater part of the north and west walls and a circular tower about 90 feet high. A row of windows in the west wall indicates the position of the great hall, and some fragments of brickwork mark the site of the east wall, which terminated with small towers. Formerly, it is said, there was an outer moat, enclosing a college that was founded by Fastolff; but no trace of the college can now be seen. Outside the existing moat, however, forming part of a modern house, is a fragment of one of the castle out-buildings, commonly called the "barge-house," although its precise purpose is unknown. At the time when the castle was built a navigable channel is

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CAISTER CASTLE.

[*To face p.* 172.

supposed to have extended to it from the river Bure. In 1443, Fastolff obtained a license from the Crown to keep six ships in his employ; these he probably used for bringing building material to the site of his new home. The principal entrance was on the west side, through a square gateway; an archway in the western wall marks its position. The south-east corner of the court-yard commands the most comprehensive view of the ruins and their background of trees; but the finest view is of the west wall and tower from beyond the moat.

Sir John Fastolff and his legacy of this castle to the Pastons figure largely in the famous "Paston Letters," and the gruff old soldier who fought so bravely and swore so vigorously is not likely to be forgotten. Born about 1378, and descended from a family that had been connected with Yarmouth since the reign of Edward I., he became a soldier at an early age and saw as much active service as any military leader of his time. We hear of him at Agincourt, at the relief of Harfleur, at the taking of Caen, and at the siege of Rouen. Honours and important offices were heaped upon him. At one time he was Governor of the Bastile, at another Regent of Normandy, and at another Governor of Anjou and Maine. At the Battle of Verneuil, in 1424, he made prisoner the Duke d'Alencon, whose ransom-money is traditionally, but quite improbably, said to have paid for the building of Caister Castle. For some five-and-twenty years or more, he was nearly always fighting; but his name is particularly associated with an enterprise with which he was entrusted while the Earl of Suffolk was investing Orleans.

The English army, in consequence of the French having laid waste all the country around the town, was suffering almost as greatly from famine as were the besieged, when Fastolff came to their relief with a large convoy of every kind of stores, which he escorted with a detachment of 2,500 men. The French were determined that this convoy should not reach the investing army, so the Counts Clermont and Dunois, with four thousand men, hastened to attack it. Fastolff, like a Boer leader threatened by an impi of Zulus, promptly went into laager, and his men made so sturdy a defence behind their wagons that the French leaders dared not attempt to carry the position by assault. Instead, they brought up a battery of guns against them, and would probably have made their position untenable if some Scottish troops, who were fighting with the French, had not broken the line of battle and brought on a hand-to-hand conflict, in which Fastolff was victorious. This little fight, which was only important in so far as the capture of the convoy would have placed the English army in a difficult position, was called the Battle of Herrings, because many of the wagons were loaded with herrings for use during Lent.

That the doughty hero of this battle, the gallant fighter at Agincourt, subsequently proved himself a coward at Pataye we cannot believe, and his character may be considered cleared of the charge brought against him. Yet Holinshed, relying on Monstrelet's account of the Pataye fight, wrote that: "From this battle departed without any stroke stricken, Sir John Fastolff, the same year for his valiantness elected into the Order of the Garter. But for doubt of misleading at this brunt

the Duke of Bedford took from him the image of St. George and his Garter; though afterwards, by means of frauds and apparent causes of good excuse, the same were to him again delivered against the mind of the Lord Talbot." And Shakespeare, in "King Henry VI.," makes the messenger from the battlefield say that the English would have won—

> "If sir John Fastolfe had not play'd the coward:
> He being in the vaward, (plac'd behind
> With purpose to relieve and follow them,)
> Cowardly fled, not having struck one stroke."

Frequent attempts to identify Shakespeare's Falstaff with the builder of Caister Castle have helped to lower him in public estimation, but it has been made pretty clear that Shakespeare had no thought of him in his mind when he created that "globe of sinful continents." Mr. C. L. Kingsford, in his "Henry V.," says: "The character who plays the greatest part in the company of Shakespeare's Prince Hal is entirely the poet's creation. Originally, both in 'The Famous Victories' and in Shakespeare's own plays, the Prince's boon companion was called Oldcastle; but when the plays were printed the name of Falstaff was substituted in deference to the feelings of Henry, Lord Cobham. When the stout old knight met his end he 'babbled of green fields,' but Oldcastle died a martyr, and this is not the man. Falstaff is in name a hazy reminiscence of Sir John Fastolff, a reputable soldier, who as a young man was in the service of Thomas, Duke of Clarence, incurred somewhat unjustly the imputation of cowardice at the Battle of Patay in 1429, and owned the Boar's Head Inn,

in Eastcheap. To this slender foundation Shakespeare's great creation must trace its origin."

Fastolff is said to have "signalised his military abilities for forty years," and he was an old man when he obtained leave to build a house at Caister. From an inventory of his effects, we learn that the best rooms in the castle, besides the state apartments, were hung with rich tapestry; that nearly all the bedrooms had feather beds and down pillows scented with lavender; that his wardrobe was large and costly, including gowns of "rede felwett and blew felwett, furrid with martines, and wrought with gold at the edge"; and that the tables of his banqueting-hall were laden, on important occasions, with 251 "chargeours, disshes, and platters" of silver and silver-gilt, besides 111 "flagons, gallon cuppes, quartelets, bowls, and gobletes." At the time of his death, which occurred in 1459, he was in possession of ninety-four manors. He bequeathed to the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford, large sums for the building of schools of philosophy and law, and at Magdalen College, Oxford, it was ordained that—

> "The monks should sing, and the bell should toll
> All for the weale of Fastolfe's soul."

He was buried in the abbey church of St. Benet, at Holm, in the midst of the Bure marshes.

At his death the castle came into the possession of John Paston, but Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, asserted that Sir John had given him Caister, and that he would have it plainly." For ten years the Pastons held it, but in 1469 Mowbray, with a force of three thousand men, laid siege to it. The garrison consisted of only twenty-eight

persons, but this little band managed to keep the besiegers at bay for several days, and it was only "from sore lack of victual and gunpowder" that they were forced to surrender. The lengthy legal proceedings which ensued are frequently referred to in the "Paston Letters," and it is not surprising that "My Lord of Norwich" should have said to Margaret Paston that "he would not abide the sorrow and trouble" Caister had caused John Paston, not even to have won "all Sir John Fastolff's goods." Not until Mowbray's death did the king confirm the Pastons' right to the estate. It continued in their possession until the middle of the seventeenth century, and until 1599 it was their principal Norfolk seat; but in that year they removed to Oxnead, where Clement Paston had built a fine house. One other glimpse into the history of Caister is afforded by an old MS. Genealogy of the Paston family, compiled by Sandford in 1674, where it is recorded of Clement Paston that he "was a man of great stomach and courage. He served King Henry the eight divers times in his war, both by land and sea. He was at the burning of Conquet, a town in France, when he was but a very young man. After that he was made a Captain of one of the King's ships of war, and in a battle fought by sea between the French and English, he took a galley of the King of France, and in it he took prisoner the Admiral of France, called Baron St. Blancard, whom he brought into England, and kept him at Caister by Yarmouth till he paid for his ransom seven thousand crowns over and beside the spoil of the said galley, where among other things he had a cup and two snakes of gold, which were the said Baron St. Blancard's,

the which during his life he did upon high days wear, and after he left the same as a monument to his name." The capture of this unfortunate admiral seems to have been considered the most important event of Clement Paston's life; for on his tomb in Oxnead Church can be read the lines—

> "A peer of France, in spite of all his betters,
> He took in fight, and brought him home in fetters";

but a man who was called by Henry VIII., his Champion; by the Duke of Somerset, his Soldier; by Queen Mary, her Seaman; and by Queen Elizabeth, her Father, must have done greater deeds.

A curious compound apparition, consisting of a spectre with his head under his arm, driving a coach drawn by four headless horses, is said to haunt the neighbourhood of Caister Castle, just as it does the neighbourhood of Blickling, where the spectral driver is supposed to be Sir Thomas Boleyn. There is no recent record of its appearance, but many years ago a Norfolk rustic declared that he saw it, and that the phantom driver asked him to open a gate for him. This the man did, but, as he afterwards said, "he warn't sich a fule as to turn his head; and well a' didn't, for Sir Thomas passed him full gallop like."

The name of Caister suggests that there was a Roman camp here, and its site is generally supposed to be on the crest of a low hill north-west of the church; but the Roman relics found here point to there having been a villa and small settlement rather than a military post. They consist of Roman pavement, a few urns, a large quantity of broken pottery, a kiln, a midden containing

bones of the ox, pig, and many oyster-shells, and coins dating from A.D. 80 to A.D. 378. Apart from Caister, the names of most of the parishes in the district upon which we have now entered are unmistakably Danish; for the suffix *by* is, as Professor Windle says, perhaps the most noteworthy Danish contribution to English place-names, and in Mautby, Thrigby, Rollesby, and several other parish names found in these Flegg (Norse *flegg*, flat) Hundreds we have preserved not only the Danish suffix, but also, in all probability, Danish personal names. It would seem that in Saxon times, if not earlier, a considerable number of *vesterviking* Northmen must have made their way into the great estuary now represented by Breydon and the marshes of the Broads district, where they made their homes on the shores of inlets or on little holms or islets surrounded by the tidal waters. There they probably gained a livelihood by fishing and fowling, and there their descendants have dwelt ever since, some of them still spending their time in much the same way as did their early ancestors—netting the rivers for eels, luring wild-fowl by imitating their cries and call-notes, banking-up the river-walls, clearing the dykes, and tending the cattle in the marshes. As a rule you may recognise one of them at once by his tall, sinewy frame, blue eyes, ruddy cheeks, and fair hair; for in appearance they are almost as much Northmen to-day as were their piratical forefathers more than a thousand years ago. Go almost wherever you will in the Flegg Hundreds, and you find Thurtles, Kettles, Skinners, and Ulphs, whose names suggest Thorkill, Skirnir, and Olaf, and many others that are of common occurrence in Denmark and Norway to-day can be found in

voters' lists and directories. Among the Yarmouth fishermen the Northman type is often encountered. Many of these men have their homes in the Flegg district, but a considerable number of them live in the villages of the Waveney valley, where similar traces of Danish settlements are met with. For instance, near Aldeby, a typical Danish river-side site, a few miles below Beccles, there is said to have been a hamlet with the strikingly suggestive name of Thurketeliart. At Billockby, a Flegg parish, about 8 miles from Yarmouth, all the land was held by a Dane named Ketel at the time of the Confessor; while Ulketel held land in Burgh St. Margaret and Rigulf in Bastwick. Few, if any, relics have been discovered which can, with certainty, be connected with the Danish settlers of Saxon times; but in the marsh-bordering villages one may sometimes hear of the remains of large boats, possibly viking-ships, having been discovered by marshmen engaged in cutting dikes at some distance from the navigable water-ways.

The main road running north-westward through these old Danish settlements turns inland a mile or so beyond the village of Caister, and brings the traveller to Ormesby Broad, one of three large Broads—the others being Filby and Rollesby—connected by narrow, shallow channels, but inaccessible to cruisers on the Bure. They can be explored by any one who hires a rowing-boat at one of the waterside inns, and an angler can generally rely on having good sport, but the wild-fowl shooting on these broads is preserved. Mautby, a parish adjoining Filby, was the early home of Margaret de Mauteby, who married John Paston, and whose letters are the most delightful in the voluminous Paston series. She died in 1484,

and was buried in Mautby Church, "before the image of Our Lady," but unfortunately the aisle that contained her tomb was allowed to become a ruin, and it has now disappeared. During the latter years of her life, after her husband's death, she lived at Mautby, amid the scenes with which she had been familiar in her childhood.

Adjoining Caister on the north is the churchless hamlet of Scratby, off the coast of which, in the sixteenth century, a large sand-bank formed and was known as Scratby Sand or "Yarmouth Sand." For a few years it remained uncovered even during the highest tides; grass grew upon it; sea-birds—probably terns—made their nests there; and on the 2nd of August, 1580, a kind of picnic was held on it, dinner being provided for forty-three people. Two years later the sand was swept away by a strong easterly wind and a scouring tide. To-day there is nothing to see in Scratby, but Winterton, a mile or two northward, is the largest village on the flat, sea-worn coast between Caister and Happisburgh, and its sandy beach, sheltered on the west by sand-hills, attracts a few visitors every summer. Daniel Defoe, who visited this part of the coast about 1722, wrote of it, that the farmers and other country people "had scarce a barn, or a shed, or a stable, nay, not the pales of their yards and gardens . . . but what was built of old planks, beams, wales, and timbers, etc., the wrecks of ships, and ruins of mariners' and merchants' fortunes." He also relates how, in 1692, when a fleet of two hundred sail of light colliers "went out of Yarmouth Roads with a fair wind, to pursue their voyage, and were taken short with a storm of wind at N.E., after they were past

Winterton Ness a few leagues; some of them, whose masters were a little more wary than the rest, or perhaps, who made a better judgment of things, or who were not so far out as the rest, tacked, and put back in time, and got safe into the roads; but the rest pushing on in the hopes to keep out to sea, and weather it, were by the violence of the storm driven back, when they were too far embayed to weather Winterton Ness as above, and so were forced to run west, every one shifting for themselves as well as they could; some run away for Lynn Deeps, but few of them (the night being so dark) could find their way in there; some, but very few, rode it out at a distance; the rest, being above 140 sail, were all driven on shore and dashed to pieces, and very few of the people on board were saved: at the very same unhappy juncture, a fleet of laden ships were coming from the north, and being just crossing the same bay, were forcibly driven into it, not able to weather the Ness, and so were involved in the same ruin as the light fleet was; also some coasting vessels, laden with corn from Lynn and Wells, and bound for Holland, were with the same unhappy luck just come out to begin their voyage, and some of them lay at anchor; these also met with the same misfortune, so that, in the whole, above 200 sail of ships, and above a thousand people perished in the disaster of that one miserable night, very few escaping."

On the 1st of September 1756, the Winterton folk saw the finish of a sharp sea-fight between H.M.S. *Hazard* and the French privateer *La Subtille*, carrying twelve guns and eighty-six men. The engagement began off Lowestoft, and was continued for six hours. The prisoners were landed

at Yarmouth and lodged in the gaol; but by undermining a wall fourteen of them escaped, and only four were retaken. Winterton Church tower, which in the daytime is as conspicuous a landmark as the lighthouse standing on a hill at the north-east end of the village, is the finest in the district. The fifteenth-century porch is richly ornamented, but much mutilated.

The low-lying coast between Winterton and Palling is the seashore of Broadland. Just within the sand-hills lie the marshlands bordering the Thurne or Hundred River, while Horsey Mere, Somerton Broad, Heigham Sounds and Hickling Broad can all be easily reached from the coast at Horsey, where, it is said, the Hundred River —now a tributary of the Bure—formerly entered the sea. Horsey Mere, indeed, is only a few minutes' walk from the beach, and from one end of it, where the Old Meadow Dyke connects it with Heigham Sounds, the seashore sand-hills are clearly seen. Geologists prophecy that the time will come when the valleys of Broadland, which once formed a great estuary, will again be submerged; and people who know this part of the coast are well aware that the maram-hills of Horsey and Eccles are the weakest spot in the sand rampart that is the only protection of the low lands against the encroaching sea. Centuries ago, when the marshlands were little better than sedgy fens, the coast was being gradually washed away, and sometimes the sea won back for a while the land it had lost. In 1287, according to John of Oxnead, it broke in at Horsey and flooded all the marsh-lands near the coast, beating down houses, and drowning 180 people in the village of Hickling

alone. In 1607 a similar inundation occurred, the breach then made being so large that for some time the sea poured through it at every high tide and flooded the low-lying land "into the very body and heart of the county"; and although a special Act of Parliament was passed "for the speedy recovery of many thousand acres of marsh-land . . . lately surrounded by the rage of the sea . . . and for the prevention of danger of the like surrounding hereafter," the sea on more than one occasion burst through the sand-hills into the valley of the Hundred River. This happened as recently as 1897, when the Horsey marshes were submerged. The Sea Breach Commissioners do their best to protect the threatened lands, and at Horsey and Eccles men have been employed in widening the bases of the sand-hills by bringing down sand from their crests; but the weak spot has not been permanently strengthened, and at any time a similar catastrophe may occur.

Under ordinary conditions the marshes at Horsey are well drained, and although some of them still produce a flora closely resembling that of the fen, the fauna of the district is nothing like so rich and interesting as it used to be. The beautiful little bearded titmouse—which nests nowhere in England save around three or four of the Broads—can generally be heard uttering its musical call-note in the reed-beds of Heigham and Hickling; but the bittern, the black tern, the avocet, and the black-tailed godwit, which used to breed in the Horsey marshes, are now numbered among Britain's lost breeding birds. Three species of harrier, too—the marsh, hen, and Montagu's—formerly nested within a mile or so of Horsey beach, while the handsome shelduck

inhabited the sand-hills, where it made its nest in a rabbit burrow, as the stock-dove does to-day. Sir Thomas Browne, in his notes on the birds of Norfolk refers to "an onocrotalus or pelican shot upon Horsey Fen 1663 May 22, which stuffed and cleansed I yet retain . . . a fowl which none could remember upon this coast. About the same time I heard one of the King's pelicans was lost at St. James'; perhaps this might be the same." It has also been proved that in the sixteenth century the crane used to nest in the neighbourhood of Hickling.

At Waxham, as nearly everywhere along this part of the coast, the interest for the coast-rambler lies on the landward side of the sand-hills. Here it is mainly centred in what is left of the Tudor manor-house of the Wodehouses, now much modernised, but still surrounded by an old turreted wall with a pinnacled gateway. Some portions of the house show fine old work in the shape of doorways and windows; while a grand old barn—like several others, said to be the largest in Norfolk—looks as if it had been built for the storage of a great deal more corn than is at present grown on Waxham acres. Such, indeed, may well have been the case; for the situation of the Hall, just inside the sand-hills, suggests that the sea must have washed away a considerable tract of land since it was built. Local tradition asserts that "miles and miles" of land have gone since "ye towne of Waxsam," as the inscription on the church chalice has it, was appropriated to the kitchen of St. Benet's Abbey; and to this fact, no doubt, the ruined state of the church is partly due. Five-and-twenty years ago there was no more neglected-looking church

along the Norfolk coast. Its roofless tower is described as having been a "huge pigeon locker," and its bricked-up windows, combined with the fact of its having no bell, may have given rise to the local saying "as blind, deaf and dumb as Waxham steeple." At one time the church served as a boathouse; for some hooks used to be pointed out, on a beam in the nave, from which a boat used in life-saving was suspended in the days before lifeboats were invented. Since then some portions of the church have been restored, and the reproach of neglect can no longer be brought against those responsible for its preservation. A noteworthy feature of the interior is a locker in which the processional cross and banner staves were kept; there is also an altar tomb, without inscription, believed to be that of a member of the Wodehouse family. According to Spelman, the antiquary, Sir William Wodehouse, who lived at the Hall in the reign of James I., was the builder of the first duck-decoy constructed in Norfolk, and Mr. T. Southwell, an authority on the subject of East Anglian decoys, thinks that Spelman's assertion is quite likely to be correct, though there were probably decoys *in England* at an earlier date. The Waxham decoy was in a wood called Lambrig, where some traces of it can still be seen. It is recorded of Sir William Wodehouse that in 1598 he, with four others, waylaid Sir Robert Drury at Tottenham and left him for dead.

Waxham is a dismal little place, and Palling, a mile or so further along the coast road, is not much better, though it has a fine wide beach and plenty of sand-hills for lounging. A little 'long-shore fishing is carried on by the Palling beachmen,

who have the reputation of being expert boatmen, their skill in this direction being partly a consequence of their handling of fishing-boats and partly a result of their services having been so often called upon to save the lives of the crews of vessels driven on to the dreaded Hasboro' Sands. The village, with its old inn, towards which most of the fishermen usually gravitate in the course of the day, its yawls, and its quaint old cottages is almost on a level with the beach, and it shows signs of having suffered from incursions of the sea. Its church, like that of Waxham, was for a long time in a very dilapidated state; it is dedicated to St. Margaret, and a century and a half ago it was written of it that it "does that saint no honour." Some much-needed restoration has recently been carried out. The church is interesting to archæologists on account of its embodying portions dating from early in the reign of Edward III., also for the fifteenth-century woodwork of the south door and many of the benches in the nave. The font, too, dates from the fifteenth century, and, as at Waxham, there is a processional cross locker.

That the coast between Caister and Palling is monotonous no one can deny. Except where a little fishing village straggles down towards the beach, there is nothing to be seen but sea, beach, and sand-hill; for the undulating hillocks of sand, although in places only a few feet in height, are nearly always just high enough to hide the low-lying land they safeguard from invasion by the sea. Beyond Palling there is another stretch of lonely shore bordered by sand-hills, but once the village is left behind the traveller sees that he has nearly reached the end

of the monotonous level, and that every step is bringing him nearer to higher ground and more varied scenery. On the verge of this upland country the lofty lighthouse tower at Happisburgh is a landmark for the footfarer as well as the sailor, and between it and Palling there is very little to tempt one to turn aside from the winding coast road. At Eccles only a small portion of what was once a large parish remains unconquered by the sea ; its church tower, which for several years stood lonely in the midst of the beach, has fallen, and only a fragment of its base remains half-hidden by shingle and sand. What is left of the parish is united, for ecclesiastical purposes, with Hempstead, where the church contains one of the finest painted screens in Norfolk, remarkable for having, on one of its panels, a probably unique figure of St. John of Bridlington, who was not formally canonised. At Lessingham, another isolated parish crossed by the coast road, the church has an old painted screen, but here some of the figures are substitutes for the original ones.

It is impossible to say how much land has been lost along this part of the coast. The Waxham folk's "miles and miles" is probably no exaggeration, for the known facts point to the loss having been very great. After scouring tides have been experienced at Eccles, the remains of an ancient tract of fen or forest are sometimes exposed to view on the beach, and in 1605, when the inhabitants of the village petitioned the king for funds to restore their church, it was stated that the parish had been reduced from 2,000 acres and eighty houses to 300 acres with fourteen houses. Even this does not tell all that is known of the

story of the sea's siege of Eccles; for Mr. Walter Rye has ascertained that a patent for the erection of this church was granted in 1338, an earlier one having been destroyed by the waves. Having seen one church destroyed, the villagers are not likely to have chosen a site for the second one near the sea; yet by the beginning of the seventeenth century the sea had approached to within a quarter of a mile of the second church. From that time onward the advance of the sea was slow but sure, and Sir Charles Lyell, in describing the erosion of the Norfolk coast, illustrated by the position of Eccles Church tower the gradual retreat of the sand-hills before the advance of the sea. Many years ago the ruined church stood, as we have learnt, some distance from the shore. In 1839, when Sir Charles Lyell visited Norfolk, the tower was half-buried in the sand-hills; at one time it was possible to walk in and out of its belfry window. Twelve years later the sand-hills had moved further inland, leaving the tower standing clear of them on the beach. Mr. E. A. Suffling* has related how in 1880, after a north-easterly gale, he found that the sand had been swept quite away from Eccles beach, leaving the foundations of the village and church exposed to view. "So clearly," he writes, "was everything laid bare that I took a plan of the foundation of the church, which is now covered several feet beneath the sand, and may never be seen again, as the sea is so fast encroaching. By the north porch was a well, filled with rubbish and stones, and hard by were several coffins exposed in the graves. The woodwork was completely black, sodden

* "History and Legends of the Broads District," pp. 201–2.

and rotten, but the skeletons in them were fairly perfect. . . . The incoming tide washed these ancient relics of humanity from their resting-places and strewed them along the beach. The forms of the cottages were plainly visible, many of them still having their thresholds *in situ*, and many wells and out-buildings could be traced." In the first Report of the Royal Commission on Coast Erosion it was stated that between Winterton and Happisburgh erosion is irregular but continuous; it is all loss and no gain.

I can remember walking through this sparsely populated district on my way to Happisburgh late in the afternoon of a day in early spring. All day the fresh furrows of the hedgeless fields had been white with seagulls; for near the coast more gulls than rooks or grey crows follow the plough. All day, too, dun clouds had been coming up from the south-west and passing swiftly overhead and out to sea. There had been no rain, but the air was laden with moisture, which clung to the lichen-stained field-gates and the trunks of the stunted oaks, making them clammy to the touch. The earth also was saturated with it, and where the plough had lately passed, the ridges were wet and smooth, ready to gleam in the sunlight if the sun had shone. But from daybreak to dusk there was no ray of sunlight, and after midday the aspect of the countryside was sullenly sombre. All the while a buffeting, gusty wind was blowing —a wind that whistled shrilly amongst the sapless stems of last year's knapweeds and tansies, and made the sturdy but stunted oaks by the roadside strain and creak and groan.

The night came on with surprising suddenness. From any slight eminence you could watch it

approaching; its advance was swift but stealthy; it seemed bent on coming upon you unawares. After watching in a field corner a labourer repairing a bank the rabbits had undermined, I looked elsewhere for a moment, and on seeking him again I could not find him. He was still there, but the night was there too, and the night hid him. Over the newly ploughed fields the darkness gathered as though it were some enshrouding exhalation of the earth. There seemed, in the transition hour, no obvious reason for its presence there; for the sky was still grey, and against it some rooks could be seen flying inland to some distant woodland. It was that time of the day which the country-folk of East Norfolk call "shutting-in time," and in the comparatively quiet intervals between the wind-gusts I could hear the thudding of hooves and the clinking of chain harness—the ploughmen had left the fields and were on their way back to the farm stables. As I drew near Happisburgh, several of the small birds that had spent the day in the stubble betrayed the places where, in this hedgeless country, they spend the night. Startled by my footsteps, they darted from little holes in the banks, and I caught just a glimpse of them before they vanished in the gloom.

It was the hour when "Old Shuck," the grimmest apparition of the Norfolk coast, begins his nocturnal prowling. He takes the form of a huge black dog with a single flashing eye and a mouth that breaths forth fire,* and to encounter him is an omen of dread significance: it means that you will die before the year is "out." It is, perhaps,

* Sometimes Shuck is headless, but the fiery eye is never missing!

the oldest phantom in England; it has haunted these lonely roads for centuries. Probably it is of Norse origin—the Black Hound of Odin—and came to this coast with the Scandinavian raiders. Its lair is some secret place known only to itself, but some of its favourite haunts are known, and not many years ago there were men and women whom nothing would induce to venture into them after nightfall. When the wind howled around their isolated homes, it was the baying of Old Shuck they heard, and they trembled in their beds. Mr. Rye has told a tale of a practical joke played upon some fishermen by a well-known auctioneer at Cromer, now dead. Knowing that the fishermen would be leaving a house about ten o'clock at night—the hour suggests the kind of house—the joker captured a black ram, wreathed it round with clanking chains, and kept it concealed behind a bank until the men came along the road. Just as they were passing the hiding-place, the ram was pushed down the steep bank right into the midst of them. "Result," says Mr. Rye, "a most disgraceful flight and no fishing for days."

Never, during all my rambles about the Norfolk coast in the dark hours, have I encountered Old Shuck, but on the night when I approached Happisburgh under a lowering sky I was glad enough to reach the end of my journey. For "shutting-in time," during the dull days of the year, is the time when the gleaming of lamplight and firelight through the windows of the little pebble-built cottages suggests warmth, comfort, and rest, and nowhere can these good things be better appreciated than on this exposed and lonely part of the Norfolk coast.

CHAPTER X

HAPPISBURGH TO MUNDESLEY

"Thither the waters tend; they freshen as they haste,
At feel o' the night-wind, though by cliff and cliff embraced."
BROWNING.

"My sole employment is, and scrupulous care,
To place my gains beyond the reach of tides."
THOREAU.

THE village of Happisburgh, which has nothing noteworthy about it excepting a rather fine church, looks forward to the time when it will be as popular with visitors as Mundesley and Sheringham; but before that time arrives a new Happisburgh will, in all probability, have come into existence and a good deal of the present village will have sunk into the sea. As yet Happisburgh, which is locally called "Haseboro'" or "Hasboro'," is nothing like so widely known as the dangerous Hasboro' Sands, which have taken terrible toll of those who go down to the sea in ships. Hundreds of vessels have gone to pieces on that dreaded sand-bank, and thousands of lives have been lost, despite the heroic efforts of the lifeboatmen and the crews of the North Sea trawlers. No record has been kept of the Hasboro' shipwrecks; even in recent years they have been so many that the

lifeboatmen have not kept count of them; before the days of lifeboats, when the coasting trade was carried on by thousands of sailing vessels, they were far more numerous. In writing about Yarmouth, I referred to the loss of H.M.S. *Invincible* and three hundred of her crew. That disaster occurred off Happisburgh in 1801; and it was here that H.M.S. *Peggy* was lost in 1770, and H.M.S. *Hunter* in 1807. Time after time the beach between Winterton and Cromer has been strewn with the bodies of drowned seamen, and every churchyard along the coast contains the nameless graves of sailors of many nationalities. Mr. E. R. Suffling, whom I have already quoted, and who has an intimate acquaintance with the Happisburgh coast, graphically describes the scenes that have been witnessed here. "I recollect one winter," he writes, "seven large vessels lying on Hasboro' Sands at the same time, not one of which ever floated again. One was a new steamer of three thousand tons burden, called the *Ontario;* she was on her trial trip and laden with coal; when she broke up, the beach was black with coal, which came ashore in large quantities, and caused a very animated scene. . . . Farmers came with their waggons, men with donkey-carts and wheelbarrows, old women with boxes and skeps, children with bags and baskets, and every one was busy carting the wet coal home as if each lump had been a diamond. Many times I have seen the beach strewn with coal, and many times with other cargoes; at one time there was a line of bright oranges lining the beach . . . at another time the beach was strewn with pit props and telegraph poles; another, with wheat, some in sacks and some loose. Thousands of boxes of



GATEWAY, BROMHOLM PRIORY.

[*To face p.* 194.

matches were about on another occasion, some of them, in large zinc cases, being very little the worse for their swim. Flour in barrels was the flotsam from another vessel, . . . a cargo of pigs, ready dressed for market, found ready customers awaiting them on shore, and for months after the air of the village was redolent of cooking pork at meal-times, morning, noon, and night. Russian tallow, coconut husks, wax candles, dead oxen ready for market, and bales of made-up fabrics help to swell the list of flotsam and jetsom cast ashore in this district during the past twenty-five years."

One is always hearing about the wild doings of the old-time smugglers along this part of the coast, and every Cart Gap in the cliffs is said to have been used by the cargo-runners; but with one or two exceptions the stories told of the smugglers' escapades are disappointing. There is a great sameness about them, and one cannot help thinking that one story, with slight variations, often serves for several localities. Only in East Norfolk, however, could it occur to the "free-traders" to take advantage of the general credulity in respect to Old Shuck by tying a lantern to a dog or a donkey to scare away inquisitive people by making them think that the canine phantom was pursuing them. Palling was at one time the headquarters of a gang of smugglers who went about armed with pistols; the last survivor of the gang, a swaggering old fellow who carried a pistol in his belt long after cargo-running was put a stop to, used to frequent the neighbourhood of the little Broadland staithe at Stalham, about five miles from Happisburgh. To that staithe, it is said, cargoes of smuggled goods were brought and

placed on board wherries bound for Norwich; but sometimes the Preventive men were on the alert and the kegs and bales never reached their destination. Occasionally they were stored for a while in one or another of the marshland windmills. A mill near Stalham Dyke is traditionally recorded to have served as a *cache* for cargoes landed between Horsey and Happisburgh, and it is believed that many kegs, which were sunk in Sutton Broad hard by, were never recovered.

Another smuggling gang, whose operations were carried on along the coast to the north of Happisburgh, chose an old manor-house, supposed to be haunted, as a hiding-place for their contraband stuff, and one of the gang, dressed up in ghostly garb, would perform mysterious antics in order to keep curious villagers and other folk away from the house. Either this or another local gang for a long time baffled the coastguard in the neighbourhood of Sidestrand, where a field called Hickman's Folly, near an old mill, is said to be named after an officer of the coastguard who, with his men, attempted to capture a contraband load as it was being conveyed along a narrow lane beside the mill. The smugglers, however, proved to be the stronger party, and Hickman and his men were overpowered and bound to trees. But a few miles further southward a number of smugglers were captured by a young officer who received promotion for his smartness. Generally, however, the luck seems to have been with the cargo-runners. As an instance of this, I may quote the experience of an old lady who when a child—this would be about 1820—was staying at a farmhouse about three miles from the sea. During the night she heard hoarse whispers and

the rumbling of carts beneath her bedroom window, and next morning, on asking the meaning of this, she was told that it was merely significant of farming operations. The reply satisfied her until a party of Preventive men came and searched the place, having traced cart tracks from a neighbouring cliff gap to the farmhouse. There was not the slightest doubt that a quantity of smuggled goods was hidden on the premises; but although it was diligently sought for it could not be found. There was one place, however, into which the seekers forgot to look—beneath the sawdust in a saw-pit, where there was a curiously devised storehouse.

Of a Norwich merchant, who was also a smuggler, and who hid his contraband merchandise in the old Dolphin Inn, at Heigham (once the residence of the learned Bishop Hall), a tale is told of how he was surprised by the Preventive men at Bacton, a few miles north-west of Happisburgh, and escaped by lying down in the middle of a field of corn and making his horse lie down beside him. A weirder story, told by Mr. Suffling,* concerns Happisburgh itself. Early in the last century great consternation was caused in the village by the frequent appearance, in the main street, of a ghastly spectre that came from the direction of the Cart Gap. The spectre was legless and almost headless; for its head was nearly severed and hung down its back; that it was a spectral sailor was suggested by its clothes, which were those of a seaman of the "pig-tail" days. It carried a mysterious burden in its arms. Time after time it was encountered by people

* "History and Legends of the Broad District," pp. 107–11.

abroad after nightfall, and at last two farmers resolved to keep watch for it. They did so, and followed it to a well, down which it dropped its burden and then disappeared. Next day, when the farmers told their tale, it was agreed to search the well, and a young man named Harmer volunteered to descend into it. He was lowered by means of a rope, and found in the water at the bottom of it a sack tied at the mouth. This, on being hauled out, was discovered to contain a pair of human legs that had been hacked off at the thighs. Horrified by this discovery, Harmer refused to descend the well again, but a young fisherman was persuaded to go down. He, too, by means of a hook and line succeeded in hooking "something," and when he was hauled up he held in his arms what looked like a mass of wet clothes. On examination it proved to be the body of a man dressed just as the ghost had been, and whose head was attached to the body by a strip of flesh only, at the back of the neck. A week or two afterwards, writes Mr. Suffling, evidence was obtained that a sailor had been murdered near the Cart Gap, where a pool of blood was discovered, and, in a shed near by, a pistol that matched one found on the decapitated body. Some gold pieces were also found embedded in the earth, and fragments of three empty "Schiedam bottles" were strewn about. From all this, it was deduced that a party of Dutch smugglers had landed on the coast, where they had caroused and quarrelled, and one of their number had been killed by having his head nearly severed from his body. His companions, it was assumed, had then cut off his legs in order that the body might be more easily conveyed to the well; but why they

disposed of it as they did when they might have buried it in the sand, is a point that has never been satisfactorily settled.

As the line of cliffs extending almost unbroken from Happisburgh to Weybourn has received much attention from eminent geologists, in consequence of its interesting Glacial and pre-Glacial deposits, a few remarks upon its main features will not be out of place here. The pre-glacial period is represented at Happisburgh, Cromer, Runton, and Weybourn, by the so-called Forest Bed series, consisting of fresh-water and estuarine deposits, from which a large quantity of mammalian remains have been obtained, alike in character to those referred to in connection with the cliffs between Kessingland and Lowestoft. In the Norwich Museum there is a magnificent collection of Forest Bed fossils, including remains of elephants, the hippopotamus, two species of rhinoceros, hyænas, cave bears, musk oxen, and many species of deer, nearly all of which were found in the cliffs of this part of the coast, where beachmen and coastguardsmen, as well as geologists, have always been ready to search for them when the cliffs have been scoured away by high tides. Of the Glacial deposits, the Cromer Till and the Contorted Drift, containing ice-borne boulders and masses of chalk, are well exposed in cliff sections at Happisburgh, Walcott, and Bacton. Some of the boulders, it is believed, are of Scandinavian origin and were brought into Norfolk by a great glacier that emerged from the Baltic. The name of Contorted Drift has been given to certain beds on account of their having been disturbed and contorted by the action of ice. An early stage of the Glacial period is

represented in the neighbourhood of Cromer by sands containing many northern shells, while between Cromer and Weybourn there are interesting exposures of the pre-Glacial Norwich Crag. At Mundesley an ancient river-bed hollowed out in the Glacial beds is filled by some interesting fresh-water deposits. Shells and remains of fishes have been found in these beds; also a carapace of a fresh-water tortoise (*Emys lutaria*).

The ruins of Bromholm Priory—sometimes called Bacton Abbey—can be seen from the cliffs about three miles from Happisburgh, occupying a tract of slightly elevated ground closely adjoining the older part of the village. A gateway, Transition Norman in the lower part and Perpendicular above, is still used as the chief entrance to the precincts, which are enclosed by portions of their old wall. The remains of the other monastic buildings are very fragmentary, the most noteworthy being those of the north transept of the priory church, probably dating from the latter part of the twelfth century; and the chapter-house, which has some interesting Early English arcading. There are also some remains of the dormitory. This priory for Cluniac monks, founded in 1113 by William de Glanvile and dedicated to St. Andrew, was until 1298 a cell to the priory at Castleacre. It became rich and famous through possessing a Holy Rood, said to be made of a portion of that on which Christ was crucified. How this precious relic came to Bromholm is told by Roger of Wendover, who relates that in the days when Baldwin, Count of Flanders, was Emperor of Constantinople, a certain English chaplain, hearing that Baldwin had been killed

in battle, took flight to England, carrying with him a number of rings and relics, including the Holy Rood. On arriving in this country he went to St. Albans, where he sold to one of the monks a cross set with silver and gold, two fingers of St. Margaret, and some rings and jewels. "The said chaplain then drew from his mantle a wooden cross and showed it to some of the monks, and declared on his oath that it was undoubtedly a piece of the Cross on which the Saviour of the world was suspended for the redemption of the human race; but as his assertions were disbelieved at that place, he departed, taking with him this precious treasure. . . . This said chaplain had two young children about whose support and for the preservation of whom he was most anxious, for which purpose he offered the aforesaid cross to several monasteries on condition that he and his children should be received among the brethren of the monastery; and having endured repulses from the rich in many places he at length came to a chapel in the county of Norfolk, called Bromholm, very poor and altogether destitute of buildings; there he sent for the Prior and some of the brethren, and showed them the above-mentioned cross, which was constructed of two pieces of wood placed across one another, and almost as wide as the hand of a man; he then humbly implored them to receive him into their order with this cross and the other relics which he had with him, as well as his two children. The Prior and his brethren then were overjoyed to possess such a treasure, and by the intervention of the Lord, who always protects honourable poverty, put faith in the words of the monk; they then with due reverence received the cross of our Lord and

carried it into their oratory, and with all devotion preserved it in the most honourable place there. Then divine miracles began to be wrought in that monastery to the praise and glory of the life-giving cross; for there the dead were restored to life, the blind recovered their sight, and the lame their power of walking, the skin of the lepers was made clean, and those possessed of devils were released from them, and any sick person who approached the aforesaid cross with faith went away safe and sound. This said cross is frequently worshipped, not only by the English people, but also by those from distant countries, and those who have heard of the divine miracles connected with it."

The Holy Rood became widely renowned, and as a resort of pilgrims Bromholm Priory had only one noteworthy rival—Walsingham Priory, famous for its wonder-working image of Our Lady. References to pilgrimages to Bromholm are frequently met with in histories and monastic chronicles, while Chaucer, in "The Reeve's Tale," makes the miller's wife exclaim, "Help, holy crois of Bromeholme!" and Piers Plowman, in his "Vision," alludes to both of the famous Norfolk shrines in his lines—

> "But wenden to Walsingham, and my wife Alis,
> And byd the roode of Bromholm bring me out of dette."

At the dissolution of the monasteries, Bromholm Priory was granted to Thomas Wodehouse, of Waxham, its revenue at that time being £144 19s. 1d. What became of the famous Rood is uncertain, though a note in Foxe's "Acts and Monuments" suggests that it was burned; for we read there that Sir Hugh Pie, chaplain of

Ludney, in the Diocese of Norwich, was charged with having "cast the cross of Bromholm into the fire to be burned, which he took from one John Welgate of Ludney." The charge was dismissed, and there is just a possibility that the cross may be still in existence. A note printed in *Eastern Counties Collectanea** reads: "A convent of nuns in Yorkshire, who have a large piece of the Cross of our Lord set in silver in the shape of a Jerusalem cross, desire to trace its history. A member of the family of Paston was at one time Superioress of this convent. Now the Pastons were intimately connected with the Priory of Bromholm, and lived in the next parish; and it does not seem improbable that at the Dissolution the celebrated relic of the True Cross, for which Bromholm was famous, may have come into the possession of the Paston family."

The main road from Bacton to Mundesley passes through Paston, the village from which the famous family just referred to took their name. Their old home has disappeared, though its fine barn—another of the "largest in Norfolk"—is still standing, and in the church there are some monuments to members of the family, the finest being that of Catherine, wife of Sir Edward Paston, who died in 1628. It is a work of the sculptor Nathaniel Stone, who in his diary states that "In 1628, I made a tomb for my lady Paston, and set it up at Paston, and was very extraordinarily entertained, and pay'd for it £340." Other churches of unusual interest hereabouts are Knapton, which has a very beautiful double-hammer-beam roof adorned with rows of angels

* 1872–3, p. 225.

with extended wings; and Trunch, which possesses a remarkably fine wooden font-cover, differing from the ordinary kind in having room beneath it for the performance of the baptismal ceremony.

A few years ago a writer who wished to indicate the situation of Mundesley described it as a village "hard by Witton," the latter being a parish of about two hundred inhabitants. Since then the railway has come to it, linking it with North Walsham and Cromer, and making it easily accessible to excursionists and others, who now know it as Mundesley-on-Sea. It has become a popular little place, and new houses are being built rather more quickly than the sea can demolish the old ones. Long before the railway came, however, a few quietly disposed persons were in the habit of spending a week or two in summer on Mundesley beach, and the poet Cowper, whose friends brought him here when a cloud of despair had darkened his declining days, occasionally took some pleasure in the scenes the place presented to him. "My chamber," he wrote, "commands a very near view of the ocean, and the ships at high water approach the coast so closely, that a man furnished with better eyes than mine might, I doubt not, discern the sailors from the window. No situation, at least when the weather is clear and bright, can be pleasanter; which you will easily credit when I add that it imparts something a little resembling pleasure even to me." But his unhinged mind soon became overcast again, and he trod the shore "under the burden of infinite despair." His relative, the Rev. Dr. Johnson, seeking to interest him in his surroundings, one day persuaded him to walk to Happisburgh and back after dinner; but



MUNDESLEY.

[*To face p.* 204.

although the journey was accomplished it proved so exhausting to the unfortunate poet that he expressed a conviction that he would never recover from the effects of it. "Poor Soul," wrote Dr. Johnson, "he said he had never walked so far in his life but once—and besides he carried an umbrella to keep the wind from his eyes, which laid full in our faces, and made it quite hard work for him to get along with his sail spread."

In Mundesley the fishermen have—or had—a special prayer of their own, of which I have seen two slightly different versions. One runs—

"Pray God lead us;
Pray God speed us;
From all evil defend us.
Fish for our pains God send us.
Well to fish and well to haul,
And what He pleases to pay us all.
A fine night to land our nets,
And safe in with the land.
Pray God, hear my prayer."

The other is—

"Pray God lead us,
Pray God speed us,
From all evil defend us,
Well to fish and well to haul,
And what He pleases to give us all,
A fine night to land our nets,
And may we do well with all we gets.
Pray God keep us from sand and shoal,
And grant that each may have fair dole.
Pray God hear our prayer."

CHAPTER XI

CROMER AND SHERINGHAM

"E'en now I'm pillowed on a bed of flowers
That crowns a lofty cliff, which proudly towers
Above the ocean-waves. The stalks, and blades,
Chequer my tablet with their quivering shades.
On one side is a field of drooping oats,
Through which the poppies show their scarlet coats;
. . . . .
And on the other side, outspread, is seen
Ocean's blue mantle streaked with purple, and green."

KEATS.

TRIMINGHAM, Sidestrand, and Overstrand are well known as places within easy walking distance of Cromer. The coast road running through them is pleasant enough, and the views from their high ground and cliffs are wide and fine; but I fear that the charms of these villages have been exaggerated by interested and disinterested persons. Had they been inland villages, no one would have written verses about them or given them silly sentimental names. No village is so easily spoilt as a coast village; the erection of a hotel or a terrace of boarding-houses on its cliffs usually robs it of its charm for ever. There was a time when Trimingham and Sidestrand were remote and pleasant little places; but the popularity of Cromer brought them into notice, their inhabitants awoke to the fact that they

might garner another harvest besides those of the fields and sea, and now the railway has made them popular and, to some extent, commonplace picnicing grounds for Cromer visitors, who come and munch their sandwiches in the shadow of Sidestrand's ruined church tower, standing lonely by the sea.

At Trimingham the cliffs are higher than they are anywhere else along the East Anglian coast; but although wasted from time to time by the sea and by falls caused by land-springs they rarely show so sheer a face to the ocean as to make their height impressive. As a rule, the earth that gives way when a fall takes place, slides only part of the way down the cliff slope, and often, for several years, it forms a kind of terrace half-way down the face of the cliff. A peculiar feature of these terraces is the little pools that are formed on them in consequence of small hollows receiving and retaining the rain and the water discharged by land-springs. These pools often remain in existence long enough to become filled with water-plants and bordered by sedge. The view from the summit of the Trimingham cliffs is fine; but the widest view is to be had from the top of Beacon Hill, about three-quarters of a mile south-east of the village. On a clear day the spire of Norwich Cathedral and many churches—some say thirty, others forty—can be seen, whilst Mundesley, although partly built on fairly high cliffs, seems to lie in a vale. Trimingham Church probably attracted more attention during and before the fifteenth century than it does to-day, on account of its reputed possession of a wonderful miracle-working relic in the shape of the head of John the Baptist.

The fact that Amiens, Rouen, and other places claimed to be possessed of the head of the same saint is scarcely likely to have been known to the folk who made pilgrimages here, and Alice Cook, of Horstead, who, in her will, dated 1478, wrote, or had written for her, "I wyll have a man to go a pilgrimage to S. John hys hede at Trymmynham" would, no doubt, have been horrified at the suggestion that the precious relic was merely one of the many alabaster heads of St. John, such as were made at Nottingham in the fifteenth century and set up in churches as objects of devotion. To-day the most noteworthy feature of the church is its rood screen, which has some interesting panel paintings of saints. Sidestrand, which Norfolk people have no difficulty in identifying with the "Raxton" of Mr. Watts-Dunton's fascinating story "Aylwin," has a new church; but the tower of the old one is still standing near the verge of the cliff. At Overstrand, too, there is a ruined church, within the walls of which Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, the slavery abolitionist, is buried. The most interesting church hereabouts, however, is at South Repps. Its noble tower, 114 feet high, has a beautiful base course with large escallop shells for St. James, to whom the building is dedicated. Unfortunately, the aisles were taken down in 1791; but the destroyers have left a good screen, a low side window and a Decorated priest's doorway.

A little more than eight years ago I wrote* of the Cromer coast: "It is the peaceful little hamlets nestling in sheltered vales between the cornfields and heather-clad hills and the sea which are the

* "Highways and Byways in East Anglia," p. 218.



SIDESTRAND CLIFFS AND CHURCH-TOWER.

[*To face p.* 208.

chief charm of the coast near Cromer; these and the homesteads roofed with mossy thatch, the woodlands carpeted with bluebells and anemones, and the country folk, half fishermen half farm-hands, who garner the harvests of land and sea. These are what bring to Cromer those who wish to enjoy the loveliness of Devon scenery without the relaxing air of the south; and they must be made the most of while we have them. For in a little while red brick terraces will have taken the places of many of the thatched homesteads, and every heathery hillside will have its huge hotel." To my sorrow, I have proved to be a true prophet. The Cromer coast, alas! is not what it used to be. Mundesley, Trimingham, and Overstrand are no longer remote and primitive; they have their railway stations and, during "the season," their daily contingent of trippers. Cromer itself has become commonplace, and although it still boasts that the nigger minstrel and the peripatetic conjuror are not to be seen on its beach, its theatrical performances of "popular pieces from London Theatres," its variety entertainments and Sunday concerts, and its char-a-bancs and brakes have brought it down to the level of other watering-places to which it could once justly claim to be in many ways superior. It has, too, its "Advertising and Advancement Association," the institution of which, in any seaside resort, is usually a sign of decadence; a further sign being its preternatural attention to meteorological statistics. Happy the coast town or village which has no need to advertise its attractions or take its own temperature! Fortunately for Cromer, what Jane Austen wrote of it still holds good: "You should have gone to

Cromer, my dear, if you went anywhere. Dr. Parry was a week at Cromer once, and he holds it to be the best of all sea-bathing places. A fine open sea, he says, and very pure air."

Cromer will, in all probability, go on growing in popularity. Year by year the enterprising builder and suburban-minded citizen will put a finishing touch to some piece of Nature's handiwork by capping it with a villa, while new streets will straggle outwards towards the woods and hillsides, where notices of warning to trespassers will be replaced by announcements of "Diner Parisien," "Table d'Hôte," and "Bonne Cuisine." The quaint old village of Cromer, which some of the old inhabitants can remember, with its crab-catchers' cottages, its primitive jetty reached by a cliff-path and a flight of stone steps, and its little coasting ships that unloaded coal on the beach, will be as forgotten as vanished Shipden, which lies beneath the sea.

Of that old town or village of Shipden little is known; but Mr. Rye believes it to have been "a great and populous place, filled with thriving and opulent merchants." The ruins of its church of St. Peter are said to be sometimes visible, in the shape of a mass of squared flints, called the "Church Rock," when the tide is unusually low; but its position is variously put at from 400 yards from the shore eastward of the site of the old jetty to half a mile westward. The place was certainly a trading port of some importance in the middle of the fourteenth century, and it seems to have occupied low ground that has been submerged rather than high ground that the sea has washed away; for in a seventeenth-century record "marshes" are mentioned, which must

have extended seaward of the cliffs, and the names of "Shippedenmere" and "Chippedenmere," occurring in documents dated 1324 and 1326, suggest that the harbour may have been connected or identical with a marshland mere. Cromer itself was originally a hamlet of Shipden, situated, in all probability, at the seaward end of a valley opening out into the marshland; and as Shipden disappeared, house by house, and field by field, just as some of the coast villages are doing to-day, the hamlet increased in importance in consequence of Shipden's decay. Since then Cromer itself has suffered considerably through encroachment of the sea. In the reign of Edward VI. the town petitioned the Privy Council for aid in maintaining certain piers that had been constructed for its protection after a great many houses had been "swallowed up and drowned"; and in the twenty-third year of Elizabeth's reign the Queen granted to the inhabitants "license for the transporting of twenty thousand quarters of wheat, barley, and malt for the maintenance of their town and towards the building of an old decayed pier there." These records, combined with the facts that in the time of Henry VIII. it was stated, in a complaint made to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, that Haven Courts had been held in Cromer since "tyme oute of mynde," and in 1528 the town sent out thirty ships, trading chiefly to Iceland and Norway, tend to prove that the place was of considerable importance long before it became known as a watering-place. Year by year, however, the sea kept gaining upon the land, until the haven was completely destroyed, and as house after house was "swallowed up" a new Cromer came into existence on the site

occupied by the older part of the town to-day. But there has been no cessation of the sea's siege. In 1825 a mass of cliff fell which covered an area of 12 acres, and ten years later Foulness, on the east of the town, was so wasted by the waves that the old lighthouse was threatened with destruction. Soon afterwards it went "down cliff." In 1820 an old jetty was swept away, and in 1835 the same misfortune occurred to a new one, extending 70 feet into the sea. On several occasions since then huge landslides have occurred, especially where a bold piece of cliff extended from the club-house of the Royal Cromer Golf Club in the direction of Overstrand. There, as recently as October, 1908, the largest "slide" experienced during a period of thirty years took place, the scene of the fall being about midway between the lighthouse and the ridge that commands a fine view of the valley below. The sea was calm at the time, and although the tide was at flood it did not quite reach the foot of the cliff; but the undermining effect of previous tides, together with the action of land-springs, had weakened the cliff, a mass of which, measuring some 160 yards in length by 20 in width, suddenly fell away and covered the sands below with thousands of tons of earth. An account written on the day of the "slide" states that two Overstrand fishermen, walking along the shore to Cromer, found their advance threatened and their retreat cut off. "Their position was indeed perilous, for scarce had the sound of the early heralds of the oncoming slide caught their ears than hesitation spelt disaster, and so, with all the strength they could muster, they made a bold sprint through the water and over shingle across the danger zone;



CROMER.

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and none too soon, for the moment they had reached the line of safety, down came the huge mass of dislodged cliff, which, as it struck the water, threw up great volumes into the air to a great height, and disturbed the sea for a very considerable distance."

A stroll on the pier and along the cliffs and parades will reveal nearly everything that modern Cromer has to interest the stranger, who must then seek beyond the bounds of the town those heathery hills, woodland walks, pleasant byways, Tudor Halls, and unspoilt inland villages to which the neighbourhood owes the preservation of a good deal of its old charm. Felbrigg, the old home of the Windhams, is well worth a visit on account of a splendid old brass in its church; Barningham Hall, about eight miles from the town, is a good specimen of an early seventeenth-century house, built by one of the Pastons, who at Gresham occupied another and much older house, of which some traces can still be seen. The so-called Roman Camp, which lies a little way to the right of the Holt road, beyond the cemetery, consists of a low and almost circular bank and ditch on a hill known as Beacon Hill. It may be prehistoric or it may have been constructed to prevent the flames from an old beacon setting fire to the surrounding heathland. The only fairly certain thing about it is that it is not Roman; but the view from the verge of the hill is really fine.

One has no difficulty in discovering all there is to be seen around Cromer, for are not all the "sights" carefully tabulated in the Official Guide, published under the "Auspices of the Urban District Council"? At the end of that Guide "a list of the drives and places of interest with

approximate distances is given, the various means of conveyance being readily discovered from the advertisement pages." Everything, we are told, is either "unlimited," "world-famous" or "most excellent," and if the Urban District Council says so, who are we that we should question it? Still, I may find forgiveness for saying that the longer I linger in Cromer the more gladly I leave it and continue my journey towards Salthouse, Cley, Blakeney and other unpopular and delightful places that are under no "auspices," to which no week-end nor fortnightly tickets are issued, and where the voice of the Swiss waiter is not heard in the land.

After getting away from Cromer on to the heath-bordered road or lonely cliff one is little tempted to make a very long stay in Sheringham, where a delightful old fishing village has become a place of busy streets, big hotels, and boarding-houses; from the high ground of Beeston or the Skelding Hills one can see all of the place that need be seen, and at the same time enjoy grand views of the coast from Overstrand to Weybourn and of the pine-clad slopes of the inland hills. These are quite fine enough to account for Sheringham's rapid advance in popularity, and one cannot help wishing that the old village of crab-catchers and cod-fishers were changed as little as are its charming surroundings. For Sheringham, when it knew nothing of golf nor excursionists, was as quaint and attractive as Cley and Blakeney, which the meal marshes have preserved to us "unspotted from the world." Nearly every man in the village was then a fisherman and a descendant of generations of fishermen; and as a rule he could tell you more folk-lore than was preserved anywhere else along

the Norfolk coast. He could point out to you, vaguely, with a wave of his hand, the spot, out at sea, where an ancient ship had gone down with all hands and the cries of the drowning seamen were still heard by fishermen when a storm was brewing, and he could direct you to the gap in the cliffs where long ago twelve drowned sailors were thrown into a pit without the Burial Service being read over them, and where, in consequence, it was unsafe for any one to venture by night. Superstition was not confined to the fishermen, as appears from the following remarkable story, told by Mr. W. B. Gerish*:—

"One Joe S——, of Sheringham, was reproached by the vicar for his (of late) very irregular attendance at church. His answer was 'It's no use my coming, sir; I'm in bad hands, I'm bewitched. I had a filly, and she took and hanged herself, and my pigs are all foaming at the mouth.' Further inquiry elicited the fact, that he had done some harvest work for an old lady who occupied a small farm in the adjoining parish, and who was reputed to have some knowledge of witchcraft. The wheat was all carried, and he and the old lady's son were waiting on the top of the rick for the next waggon-load, when Joe noticed a large toad crawling along the breast of his companion (who was reclining half asleep) towards his open mouth. Joe called out to him, upon which he jumped up and shook the animal off, while Joe stuck his fork into it and 'hulled' it away. Before long, however, the toad reappeared, . . . and made its way towards his companion. Feeling somewhat uncomfortable at this incident, the two men took it into the

* In a MS. "Norfolk Folk-lore," in Lowestoft Public Library.

wash-house, and threw it into the fire under the boiler; but the old lady, observing the action, rescued it at once, threw it into the horse-pond, at the same time rating them soundly for their cruelty. One might reasonably have supposed this would have sufficed, but no—for soon they saw it reappear again, torn with the fork, blackened by the fire and filthy from the pond, slowly hopping towards them for the third time. Joe's superstitious explanation of this very simple action was that the seeming toad was in reality the old woman's 'imp,' which, knowing her demise to be very near at hand—for she died a few months afterwards—was leaving her and attaching itself to her son and heir. It can readily be believed that if Joe's supposition were correct he had undoubtedly incurred the displeasure of the 'imp' by his very cruel, if thoughtless, treatment of it. His ill-luck had so upset his not over-strong mental balance, as to cause him to believe that it was quite useless for him to go to church like an 'ordinary man.'"

Popularity and development, it is to be feared, have nearly, if not quite, driven the old folk-lore from the minds of the "Sheringham Shammocks"—as the men of the village were called by the "Runton Dabs," "Beeston Babies" and "Weybourn Witches"—but only a few years ago much consternation was caused in Runton by rumours of a "walking light" having been seen at night. Its appearance was locally accounted for by "some bones" having been disturbed by a man employed in digging. Upon inquiry being made, it was learnt that a cinerary urn had been dug up and destroyed on the spot where the ghostly light was seen.



SHERINGHAM.

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From a petition presented to the Privy Council in 1593, it appears that the fishermen of Sheringham were then the chief of English seamen engaged in the Iceland fishing, which supplied "the best provision of ling and codfish to the benefit of this realm"; but their boats were often greatly endangered because the inhabitants of the "town" could not obtain enough money to complete the construction of a pier that would serve as a protection to their ships and the shore. "Before the extreme rage of the sea beating upon that coast was partly intercepted by the erection of the pier yet in hand, many good houses and substantial dwellings in the said town were," complained the petitioners, "washed away and swallowed up by the same rage, and no doubt the greatest part of the same town had ere this been utterly confounded by the sea, had not the said pier, in the profound consideration of her Majesty and her most honourable Council, been begun when it was. Also many fishermen with their boats and furniture had since been cast away thereabouts, as in former time they yearly were had not the same pier been begun and followed to the pass it now was at, which pier, if it were finished according to the first, it would not only defend the town and succour fishermen inhabiting about the coast, but also be a convenient safeguard for many ships endangered upon the coast in foul weather." As a further reason why the Queen should grant them assistance in completing the building of the pier, the wily men of Sheringham urged that if this were not done "the trade of your orators into Iceland" would be "overthrown" and "many good mariners which those voyages and other occasions thereto

incident make skilful and very apt for navigation" would be "cut off to the great detriment of her Highness's sea services many ways which would be foreseen." In conclusion they advanced the unassailable argument that "if it be alleged that the pier hitherto doth small good it is to be answered that till it be finished the work cannot be perfect."

Ninety years later, when the Norfolk coast was threatened by Dutch privateers, the good folk of Sheringham again distinguished themselves as petitioners, this time to the Lord Lieutenant and Deputy Lieutenants of the county. "Our town joins," they wrote, "upon ye main sea, and we are afraid every night ye enemy should come ashore and fire our town when we be in our beds; for ye houses stand very close together, and all ye houses thatched with straw, that in one hour's time ye town may be burnt, for we have nothing to resist them with but one gun with a broken carriage and four muskets which we bought at our own cost and charges; which is a very small defence against an enemy: and likewise we have no powder nor shot for ye said gun, nor muskets, when we stand in need: we therefore humbly beseech your honours that you would be pleased to consider ye danger we live in, and that your honours would grant us four or five muskets more, and half a hundred pound of powder, and half a hundred pound of bullet; and we should think we were able to defend ye attempt of a Dutch privateer." In response to this appeal, six muskets and the required amount of ammunition were sent, with the injunction that the warriors of Sheringham should not "imbocill ye said arms and ammunition"!

CHAPTER XII

SHERINGHAM TO STIFFKEY

"But clear are these things; the grass and the sand,
Where, sure as the eyes reach, ever at hand,
With lips wide open and face burnt blind,
The strong sea-daisies feast on the sun.

The low downs lean to the sea; the stream,
One loose thin pulseless tremulous vein,
Rapid and vivid and dumb as a dream,
Works downward, sick of the sun and the rain;
The wind is rough with the rank rare flowers;
The sweet sea, mother of loves and hours,
Shudders and shines as the grey winds gleam,
Turning her smile to a fugitive pain."

A. C. SWINBURNE.

THE road from Sheringham to Wells is the most delightful of Norfolk coast roads. About two and a half miles out of Sheringham it enters Weybourn, where a small village in which most of the houses are old-fashioned and have pellitory or wallflowers growing on their walls nestles in a wooded valley and, when seen from the shore, has a fine background of wooded and heathery hills. It has a small restored church embodying some Norman portions—a church that, like the fine one at Wymondham in Norfolk, seems at first glance to have been built with two

towers; but as at Wymondham the smaller tower is that of a ruined priory, in this case a small Augustinian house, founded by Sir Ralph Meyngaryn in the reign of King John. The village is about half a mile from the beach, which is reached by a byroad leading down to a spot where the cliffs come to an end and a great shingle bank, protecting two or three houses on the seashore, lies between the sea and a reed-fringed pool inhabited by some remarkably tame coots. Westward the land slopes gradually down to the Salthouse marshlands, but there is a finer view southward—of the hills behind the village and especially of steep-sided Muckleburgh Hill, and of Telegraph Hill, which rises 269 feet above sea-level. The shingle bank slopes steeply towards the sea, and the water is probably deep near the shore; but Weybourn Hoop, that deep-water bay in which a fleet could easily have anchored for the purpose of landing an invading army on the coast, has disappeared in consequence of the sea having encroached upon the land both east and west of the village. An ancient couplet runs—

> "He who would old England win
> Must at Weybourn Hoop begin."

Pratt, in his curious and voluminous "Gleanings," writes, under date of 1798: "In revolutionary times like these . . . it ought, perhaps, to be noticed before we take leave of Norfolk, that at a place called Waborne Hope was a fortification; that the shore is stony, and the sea so deep that ships may ride and lay against it: the Danes, indeed, are said to have landed there on their invasions. It has been further observed



SHINGLE BANK, WEYBOURN.

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that this Waborne Hope, or Hoop, as it is now corruptly called, is the most dangerous place, and most open to an enemy, of any on the Norfolk coast; the shore is the boldest of any, and transport-ships may approach it so very near as almost to land an army without the assistance of flat-bottomed boats. It is an object worthy of consideration, especially at the present time, when an invasion from France is alternately threatened and attempted, whether it would not be proper to renew the fortification, and to erect a fort of modern construction, with batteries of heavy cannon to defend it."

Wars and rumours of wars seem to have been rife about Weybourn a long time ago; for in the middle of the seventeenth century a curious old prophecy was printed and circulated, stating that: "There shall come out of Denmark, a Duke, and he shall bring with him the King of Denmark and sixteen great Lords in his company, by whose consent he shall be crowned King in a town of Northumberland, and he shall reign three months and odd days. They shall land at Waborne Stone. They shall be met by the Red Deare, the Heath Cock, the Hound, and the Harrow. Between Waborn and Branksburn (? Brancaster), a Forest and a church gate, there shall be fought so mortal a battle, that from Branksburn to Cromer Bridge it shall run blood. There the King of Denmark shall be slain, and all the perilous fishes in his company." One would much like to know, what the "perilous fishes"—whatever they may have been—were doing in the company of the King of Denmark.

On the high ground above the village, beyond the Holt and Cromer railway, there are traces

of a large British village. They consist of a large number—nearly a thousand have been counted—of hut-circles or pit-dwellings, most of which are near a stream flowing through the village and an ancient trackway leading to Salthouse Heath, where there are several barrows. Excavations made some years ago revealed the plan on which these pit-dwellings were constructed. First a ridge of stones was placed around the place to be dug out. Then the soil from the interior was thrown out and the circle of stones prevented it from falling again into the pit. The diameter of the pits ranges from 8 to 20 feet, and the depth from 2 to 6 feet, the average size being about 12 feet in diameter and 3 feet deep. At the bottom of the pits many stones were found. These had probably been used for hearths or floorings. In some cases two pits were connected by narrow passages or trenches. A few years ago many similar pits existed at Aylmerton, a neighbouring parish; but these have been obliterated by the plough. They were believed to be haunted by a ghost of a "woman in white," who was said to wander amongst them, shrieking and wringing her hands. Because of this they were known as the "Shrieking Pits."

Beyond Weybourn village the road skirts the base of Muckleburgh Hill, the sides of which are clothed with bracken, bramble, wood sage and dodder-draped gorse; then it dips down into another little valley and we arrive at Kelling, a small village with a few houses bordering the main road, but more adjoining a byroad, leading to a partly ruined cruciform church. Just beyond Kelling the road forks, the right-hand branch skirting the Salthouse and Cley marsh-



CLEY STAITHE.

[*To face p.* 222.

lands, the left, which is the pleasanter to travel, passing a ruined windmill and then entering upon the furzy wilderness of Salthouse Heath. Here a well-preserved barrow called Gallows Hill rises close beside the road on the right, while on the left there are other similar mounds, some nearly hidden by dense, dark gorse. There are said to be eighteen barrows in all on this heath, including "Three Halfpenny Hill," and "Three Farthing Hill," which were opened many years ago and found to contain plain cinerary urns, in one of which were the cremated remains of several bodies. Some pits and a curious circular earthwork are also among the traces of early occupation of this ancient heathland.

About half a mile beyond the western border of the heath a byroad on the right leads down to Cley, but it is worth while to keep straight on to Wiveton in order to get a fine view of the valley of the Glaven with Cley and its splendid church on the right bank of the stream and Blakeney Church, which at a distance is even more imposing, crowning a hill to the westward. Between Cromer and Wells there is no more charming picture presented than that of these two villages, each of which, in the days when the Glaven was a fairly wide river, and ships of considerable burden could ascend it as far as Cley, was a flourishing seaport, trading with many towns along the Continental shores. With the red roofs of Cley luring one down into the valley, one cannot stay very long on the uplands of Wiveton, though the fine old flint-faced Hall is of more than passing interest. Two associations of the place, however, should be noted, one tragic, the other of more pleasing interest. The tragic

interest was supplied by the Rev. James Hackman, who in 1779 was presented to the living of Wiveton. He was a native of Gosport, and that his early inclinations were towards the Army rather than the Church is indicated by his being, in 1772, gazetted an ensign in the 68th Foot. While out with a recruiting party he met, at Lord Sandwich's house at Hinchinbrook, Martha Reay, the daughter of a stay-maker living in Holywell Street, London. She was the mistress of the fourth Earl of Sandwich, and it was said of her that "her person was uncommonly elegant, and her voice musical in a high degree." The young soldier fell madly in love with her, but she refused to marry him. Four years later he left the Army for the Church, but still continued his attentions to Miss Reay. Finally, within a short time of his being presented to the living of this small Norfolk village, "in a fit of jealous despair," he shot her through the head while she was leaving Covent Garden Theatre after a performance of "Love in a Village." He then tried to take his own life, but his self-inflicted injuries were not serious, and he was executed at Tyburn on the 19th of April, 1779.

Now for "the Wiveton Boy." His name was Ralph Greenway, and the story runs that he was a foundling whom Ralph, a shepherd, discovered one day abandoned beside a "green way." He was taken to Blakeney, where the authorities refused to adopt him; but at Wiveton thirteen charitable old women agreed to take charge of him, each of them for a year. As soon as he was old enough he was sent to sea, and he eventually became a prominent citizen of London and made a fortune. The sequel can be read in

Wiveton Church, where there is a brass plate inscribed with the following extract from his will:—

"Mem. that Raulf Grenewey Cytizen et Alderman of lodon who died 3 May, 1558, Did divise by his last Wyll that evy Sonday of the yeer before noon for ever should be distributed by the Churchwardens of this Parishe of Weveton to xiii Poore People of this parishe xiiid in Money et xiii in bred for p'formance whereof Thomas Grenewey his Heir hathe ashured ye rectory of Briston unto dyurs p'rishoners of this parish to have continuance for ever accordyng to the said last Wyll."

The winding main street of Cley has provided many subjects for artists, but the interest of the place is chiefly centred in its church. Originally a cruciform building, it has suffered severely from neglect and decay, and its transepts and west porch are in ruins; but it retains much beautiful work. From a report made to a committee appointed to consider its restoration, it appears that the lower part of the tower is the oldest portion, dating from about the middle of the thirteenth century, when the nave was shorter than the present one by the width of the tower. The present nave, chancel, and aisles, chiefly date from the fourteenth century, but the work then begun was stopped by the ravages of the Black Death. To quote the words of the report, "The extent and character of the work undertaken in the fourteenth century tell of a large and prosperous community, and now after five centuries and a half the whole population could scarcely suffice to fill the church then begun." Late in the fifteenth century an attempt was

made to finish the church, the walls of the aisles being heightened, the roofs built, two fine porches added, and a new east window inserted. Externally, the clerestory lights, consisting of cinquefoils alternating with the ordinary form, are noteworthy, as are the fine south porch and the beautiful tracery of the windows of the ruined transepts. Within, the canopies in the spandrels of the nave arcade are interesting, as are the font, six old carved stalls with misereres, a Jacobean pulpit, and some good brasses, the earliest, that of John Yslington, a priest, dating from 1429. A tomb in the churchyard is inscribed, "Here lyeth the body of James Grieve, who was an assistant of Sir Cloudesley Shovel in burning ye ships in ye port of Tripoli in Barbarii, January 14th, 1675–6, for his good service pformed was made Capt. of the ship called the Orange Tree of Algier in 1677, and presented with a medal of gold by King Charles ye 2. He died April 14, 1686, aged 48 years."

One may spend some time in wandering in and out of the nooks and corners of Cley without being satisfied that one has discovered everything worth seeing. Everywhere there are relics and fragments belonging to a time when the "town" was a busy and prosperous place, but that time is so long gone by that no one now seems to know the "why and wherefor" of anything pertaining to it. Near the George Hotel, for instance, there is a fine old arch that is said to have belonged to a monastic chapel, but of the founding and history of that chapel nothing is recorded; while on the wall of a house near by there are four curious figures that appear to have come from some church. Some day, perhaps, some one will

write the history of Cley and Blakeney, and then we may learn the truth about these and other things; in the meantime the information at our disposal is meagre. From an agreement between Henry IV. and the merchants of the German Hanse, printed by Hakluyt, we learn that there were frequent complaints about the behaviour of representatives of the Hanse, who had seized certain English ships, among them being several belonging to the port of Cley. In 1395 some of the pirates "took upon the sea a certain ship of one John Dulwer of Cley, called the Friday, (whereof Lawrence Tuk of Cley was master), and conveyed the said ship unto Maustrond in Norway, and the said master and mariners they robbed of divers commodities, namely of artillery, furniture, and salt fishes being in the same ship, to the value of 500 nobles." In the same year other ships, the *Margaret*, the *Nicholas*, the *Isabel*, the *Helena*, and the *Peter*, all belonging to Cley, were captured by the same desperadoes, their cargoes, which were similar to that of the *Friday*, being either stolen or thrown into the sea, in the case of the *Helena*, the ship herself being sunk, while the mate of the *Margaret* was "maliciously drowned." In reading this account, it is interesting to note that Wiveton also possessed ships at that time, as is made clear by the following charges made against the Hanse men:—

"Item, in the yeare of our Lord 1395, about the feast of the nativitie of S. John Baptist, the forenamed Godekins and Stertebeker,* and others of the Hans unjustly tooke a certain ship of Simon

* Probably the notorious Klaus Störtebeker, chief of the Baltic buccaneers, who was subsequently captured and executed.

Durham, called the Dogger-ship, and the Peter of Wiveton, laden with salt fishes (whereof John Austen was master) upon the coast of Denmarke. And they carried away the said Dogger, with the furniture thereof, and the foresaid salt fishes, to the value of 170 pound. Moreover, the master and 25 mariners in the same ship they maliciously slewe, and a certaine ladde of the saide Dogger they caried away with them into Wismer.

"Item, in the foresaid yeere, and about the feast aforesaid, the forenamed Godekins and Stertebeker, with other their complices, unjustly took upon the sea a certaine ship of Thomas Lyderpole and John Coote of Wiveton: and the master and mariners which were in the said shippe they villanously slue, among whom they put to death one Simon Andrew, the godsonne, nephew, and servant of the foresaid Simon Durham. Which ship, with the goods and furniture that were therein, was worth 410 nobles."

Eleven years later the men of Cley were able to render some service to Henry IV. by putting him in the position to dictate terms to the Duke of Albany, when that ambitious brother of Robert Bruce usurped the throne of Scotland. By seizing and imprisoning David, the eldest son of Bruce, Albany had removed one obstacle from his path towards the throne, and he was planning to seize James, the younger son, when Bruce, realising the boy's danger, decided to send him to France and entrust him to the protection of that friendly Power. Unfortunately for the young prince, the ship that was conveying him to France was caught in a storm off the Norfolk coast, and the captain was compelled to seek refuge in Cley Harbour. Here the prince and his guardian, the

Earl of Orkney, were made prisoners and sent to King Henry, who refused to set them at liberty. Soon afterwards the King of Scotland died. "Henry was now," writes Hume, "more sensible than ever of the acquisition which he had made: while he retained such a pledge, he was sure of keeping the Duke of Albany in dependence; or, if offended he could easily, by restoring the true heir, take ample revenge upon the usurper. But though the king, by detaining James in the English court, had shewn himself somewhat deficient in generosity, he made ample amends by giving that prince an excellent education, which afterwards qualified him, when he mounted the throne, to reform, in some measure, the rude and barbarous manners of his native country."

A wide tract of marshland, intersected by many dykes, lies between Cley and the sea, extending eastward beyond Salthouse to Weybourn. These marshes, together with the sea-wall and the dwarf bushes dotted about the levels, are frequented by large numbers of birds, especially various kinds of warblers, during the migration seasons. During September there is usually a great inrush of birds from oversea to this part of the coast, where they rest and feed before continuing their journey southward. The local gunners are then busy, and they are particularly alert to detect rare birds. Of late years, not only icterine, barred, and aquatic warblers have been shot here, but also such very rare species as Pallas's willow warbler, the yellow-browed warbler, the red-breasted flycatcher, and the desert wheatear. Shore-larks, rock pipits, and bluethroats come here in small and large flocks every autumn. It is not often, however, that a British naturalist enjoys such a

sight as was witnessed by a gang of workmen on the Wiveton bank of the Glaven in April, 1898, when four cranes alighted quite close to them and remained for some time in full view. Many years ago there was a colony of avocets in the Salthouse marshes. At the beginning of the last century these beautiful birds were so numerous that the villagers used the eggs for making puddings and pancakes, while the wild-fowlers, "to unload their punt guns, would sometimes kill ten or twelve at a shot." This hard treatment, combined with the frequent slaughter of the birds in order that their feathers might be sold to the makers of artificial flies, was undoubtedly the cause of their ceasing to breed here.

From Cley it is only a few minutes' walk to Blakeney, where another splendid church, standing on the summit of a hill sloping down to the harbour, is a familiar landmark to seamen, to whose patron saint, St. Nicholas, it is dedicated. A peculiar and probably unique feature of this church is a slender, square tower rising from the north-east corner of the chancel, supposed to have been erected to serve the purpose of a lighthouse or beacon turret. This little tower is of later date than the chancel itself, which dates from the thirteenth century and has a beautiful groined roof and a seven-light window of the same date. The fine and lofty nave, the west tower, and the font are of the fifteenth century, the last-named having the emblems of the Evangelists on the panels of its octagonal bowl, alternating with seated ecclesiastical figures bearing a book or a scroll, while the stem is carved with the emblems of the Passion. Other noteworthy features of this beautiful church are a chamber above the chancel



BLAKENEY QUAY.

[*To face p.* 230.

and some old misereres, one of which is ornamented with a carving of a remarkable bird.

The quaint, narrow main street of Blakeney winds down the hillside to the picturesque quay, where some ancient warehouses and granaries, and a fourteenth-century Guildhall remain to testify to the former importance of a place that, in the reign of Edward III., sent two ships and thirty-eight mariners to the siege of Calais, in 1588 helped to defeat the Spanish Armada, and that was for a long time a market town to which German merchants brought their wares. By the quayside two or three small coasting craft are usually moored, while beside the narrow channel winding away to the distant harbour-mouth old hulks, lying rotting on the ooze, and the boats of the oyster and mussel dredgers, supply plenty of subjects for artists. But as a fishing port, Blakeney has greatly decayed since the days when it had a yearly fish fair and its sailors, on account of their frequent voyaging to Iceland were exempt from seizure to serve in the king's fleet. Its once-famous oyster-beds have been depleted, line-fishing has been almost abandoned, and the few fishermen are mainly dependent upon the taking of mussels, cockles, and whelks.

A little rampart-like hill overlooks the quay and is a favourite resort of ancient mariners, who sometimes tell the tale of the Fiddler of Blakeney. It relates to an underground passage that is said to have connected the Guildhall with a Carmelite friary, of which there are scanty remains near the church. The fiddler, a daring man, declared that he would explore this mysterious passage; so, striking up a tune on his fiddle, he descended into its dark depths and

disappeared—for ever. Here, too, one may hear tales of the demoniacal doings of Old Shuck, that canine monster of whom we heard something at Happisburgh, and who is supposed to haunt Blakeney Long Lane; while it is even possible that some satisfactory explanation may be forthcoming of a curious local rhyme that runs—

> "The Blakeney people
> Stand on the steeple
> And crack hazel-nuts
> With a five-farthing beetle."

This neighbourhood is rather remarkable for its quaint folk-sayings and the uncomplimentary nicknames by which the inhabitants of the different parishes know each other. One local saying is that "Nowhere is under Wiveton stone bridge," another that "A Wiveton dinner is bread and butter and tea." Among the nicknames are "Cley Geese," "Blakeney Bulldogs," "Morston Dodmen (snails)," "Stiffkey Blues," and "Wells Bitefingers." Their origin is, in most instances, unknown, but the people of Wells are said to be called "Bitefingers" because one of them bit off the finger of a drowned sailor in order to get his ring.

Blakeney Harbour does not look like a place where one might expect to catch grampuses, but it is on record that in April, 1849, four or five of these huge cetaceans swam up the channel and were left, when the tide ebbed, imprisoned in a deep hole. The local fishermen watched with amazement these marine monsters wallowing about, trying to escape; and only one man, armed with a butt-spear and a boat-hook, dared to approach them. His feeble attack had little effect

upon them, and when the tide rose they succeeded in making their way back to the open sea.

A good story of the smuggling days, related by an old inhabitant of Edgefield, was repeated by the Rev. W. H. Marcom in the course of a lecture delivered a short time ago. When a cargo of contraband goods was expected to arrive at Blakeney, every Edgefield man who possessed a horse and cart would drive down to the harbour night after night and receive half a crown for doing so; but when the ship came in, and the cargo had been carried away to a safe hiding-place, each carter received five shillings. "When we'd gone," said the old man, "you could hear the guns of the Preventive men; but they never caught us, because they knew where we'd left them a keg. And we always left a keg just inside the parson's gate." When the Preventive men were succeeded by the more vigilant coastguard, the smugglers were not always so successful; and on one occasion, when the carters went down for the "stuff," they were caught and their horses and carts confiscated. In their distress they sought the aid of a well-to-do farmer who was not a "suspect," and he came down to Blakeney and interviewed the custodian of the horses—a sailor who evidently knew nothing about them. "Yes," said the sailor, "the horses were to be sold, and the farmer might look at them." It was in the spring of the year, and when the farmer went up to one of the horses he was naturally able to pull a handful of hair from its haunches. "It has the mange," he said, "and it is catching." Every horse was examined, and each yielded up a handful of hair. So alarmed was the sailor—so the story runs—that he was glad to sell the lot for five pounds, and

that night every horse was back in its owner's stable."

The strangely shaped promontory that shelters Blakeney Harbour and terminates in Blakeney Point chiefly consists of a long shingle bank and undulating sand-hills. Bordering the harbour on the south are the Morston meal marshes, intersected by innumerable creeks and drains and by a channel navigable to 'longshore boats, leading to Morston, a small fishing village on the road to Wells. Beyond Morston the meals extend to Wells, where they are more accessible than elsewhere to the pedestrian, who does well to wait until he reaches that town before he ventures to explore them.

In taking leave of Blakeney, it must not be forgotten that it was in the Carmelite friary here that John de Baconthorpe, who was a grand-nephew of Roger Bacon, and who became Provincial of the English Carmelites, entered upon a monastic life.

Continuing our journey westward, we soon enter Morston, where a glimpse of the coastguard station reminds us that here was stationed, as chief officer of the coastguard, that sturdy old sailor Lieutenant Thomas, upon whom Captain Marryat, his neighbour at Langham, was so fond of playing practical jokes. Langham, where the popular writer of stirring sea-stories lived for some years, and where he died in 1848, is a small village a mile or two south of Morston. In its church there is a tablet to the memory of Marryat, but the Manor Cottage in which he wrote "The Settlers," "The Privateersman," "The Travels of Monsieur Violet," and a portion of "Masterman Ready," has made way for a larger house. As I have written

elsewhere,* a more fitting place than Langham for the sailor-romancer to settle down in could scarcely have been chosen; for not only could he hear the roaring of the waves as they broke upon the shingle banks of Wells and Blakeney, but in his immediate neighbourhood he could find plenty to inspire him to write thrilling stories of the sea. Living in a parish adjoining Cockthorpe, he must have known that in that village two gallant admirals, Sir Cloudesley Shovel and Sir John Narborough were born, while Salthouse only a few miles away, was the birthplace of the famous Sir Christopher Myngs.

North Norfolk should be proud of having given to England not only Nelson but three such gallant seamen as Shovel, Narborough, and Myngs. Shovel, whose Cockthorpe home was in an old stone house that is said to have been fortified to withstand the attacks of smugglers and pirates, first went to sea, when only ten years old, with his neighbour John Narborough, while Myngs, whose parents are said by Pepys to have been a shoemaker and a hogman's daughter, first trod the deck of a coasting vessel sailing out of Blakeney Harbour. The story of their lives is familiar to every one who knows how England won her naval supremacy, and as we are chiefly concerned with local associations this is no fitting place to write of the exploits and sea-fights of which these Norfolk admirals were the heroes. It may be mentioned, however, that Myngs and Narborough took part in the naval battle fought off Lowestoft, and that the latter also had a command in the battle of Sole Bay. As for Myngs, who fell in the great four

* In "Some Literary Associations of East Anglia."

days' battle between Monk and Van Tromp, nothing can give us a better opinion of him than the words of Pepys, who writes that when the brave seaman was buried "about a dozen able, lusty, proper men came to the coach side with tears in their eyes, and one of them that spoke for the rest began, and says to Sir W. Coventry, 'We are here a dozen of us that have long known and served our dead commander Sir Christopher Myngs, and have now done the last office of laying him in the ground. We would be glad we had any other to offer after him, and in revenge of him. All we have is our lives; if you will please to get his Royal Highness to give us a fireship among us all, here is a dozen of us, out of all which choose you one to be commander, and the rest of us, whoever he is, will serve him, and, if possible, do that that shall show our memory of our dead commander, and our revenge." As another writer has said, "It is given to few to win such love as this. Myngs had it, and so had that other great Norfolk seaman, the greatest of all admirals, who was struck down on the deck of another *Victory* a hundred and thirty-nine years afterwards." Of Sir John Narborough's connection with Cockthorpe we know little save the fact of his having been born there; but while we are in Morston it is interesting to know that we are standing on or near the ground of a small estate with which Sir Cloudesley Shovel endowed his mother in her old age, and that in Morston Church is buried Shovel's brother-in-law, Shorten, who while he lived in this village received one of the few letters written by the famous admiral which are now in existence. This letter, written from the coast of France, where King James, we are told, "was reedy to imbark



THE VALE OF STIFFKEY.

[*To face p.* 236.

with twenty thousand french in order to make a bloody warr in our country," concludes, "This, with my duty to my mother, humbly craving her blessing, also my love to my sister and yourself and all frindes, I remain your loving brother, Cloud. Shovell."

Morston Church, standing in a graveyard containing very few headstones, is chiefly interesting for possessing eight old painted screen panels with figures of saints. There is also a grim-looking mural tablet, surrounded by carvings of skulls, cross-bones, pickaxes, spades, a coffin, an hour-glass, and a scythe, to the memory of Susan King, who died in 1615, aged 23. It is inscribed with the rather curious lines :—

> "Though gifts of nature, yet thy gifts of grace,
> The all-devouring grave cannot deface;
> Witness thy godly life, thy blessed end,
> Thy conflicts and thy conquest of ye feind,
> When to thy present frindes thy dying breath,
> Did sounde thy joyfull triumph over death.
> Thy sacred ashes in the earth shall rest,
> Till union make both soule and body blest."

Morston is a rather bleak little place, almost as exposed to the winds as are the unsheltered meal marshes, but towards Stiffkey the country is more wooded and the scenery of the little valley of the Stiffkey River is in some places delightful. This little river, which enters Blakeney Harbour nearly opposite the Point, is crossed about a mile from Morston, and for a short distance the road runs close beside it. Stiffkey itself, locally known as "Stewkey," lies in the hollow of the vale, and is a village of reposeful charm, made the more picturesque by having for a background a bold, wooded hill. To the north of the village the land

slopes down to the meals, just beyond which are the cockle-beds from which the women and girls of Stiffkey gather up the best of English cockles, the famous "Stewkey Blues." Day after day the hardy "cocklers," carrying bags, buckets, and baskets, go down on to the gleaming flats when the tide is out, and they make a quaint picture as they stoop to dig up the shell-fish that are buried in the sand; but owing to the curious but convenient way in which they adjust their garments before setting to work they are rather shy of onlookers, and a too-inquisitive male intruder sometimes meets with a rather discomfiting reception. A little more than ten years ago nearly a hundred persons, chiefly women and girls, gained a livelihood by gathering cockles here; but of late years, owing to the silting-up of the cockle-bed, there has been a gradual decrease in the number of the regular cocklers.

Formerly there were two churches standing in one churchyard at Stiffkey, but about the middle of the sixteenth century St. John's Church was allowed to fall into decay, and to-day no trace of it can be seen. The present parish church, a restored Decorated and Perpendicular building, contains nothing very noteworthy apart from a monument to Sir Nathaniel Bacon, second son of Sir Nicholas Bacon, Queen Elizabeth's Keeper of the Privy Seal. Sir Nicholas, whose principal country seat was at Redgrave, in Suffolk, where on four occasions he entertained Queen Elizabeth, began the building of a fine manor-house at Stiffkey, and in his will, dated 1578, he left to his son Nathaniel "towardes the building of his house at Stiffkey two hundred pounds," together with his local leases and the sheep "goinge uppon them."

Some inquirers into the history of the village say that the famous Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam, who was a son of Sir Nicholas by his second wife, completed the building of the manor-house in 1604; but the arms on the gateway are those of Sir Nathaniel and his wife. The old house is still standing close beside the church, and although much dilapidated it is sufficiently intact to convey some idea of its original size and stateliness. It is built of red brick and has brick mullioned windows and six circular towers. Over the stable door is a carving of the Bacon pig, the presence of which reminded a writer,* who has given us a most interesting topographical account of this district, of the story of how a certain malefactor named Hogg, when sentenced to death by Sir Francis Bacon, pleaded for mercy on the ground of his kinship. "You will be no kinsman of mine till you are hanged," said the judge, with grim humour, "and hanged you shall be!" More than a hundred years before the Bacons became connected with Stiffkey, the manor belonged to Geoffrey Boleyn, Lord Mayor of London, and great-grandfather of Queen Anne Boleyn.

On Warborough Hill, which the road to Wells ascends a little way beyond the end of Stiffkey village street, there are supposed to be remains of old entrenchments. By passing through a gateway leading to a gravel-pit the crown of the hill can easily be reached, and a fine view can be enjoyed, but the entrenchments are quite indistinguishable, though there is a fairly well-preserved barrow. By taking a byroad on the left, however, and passing through Warham All Saints

* Mr. J. Hooper, author of "Nelson's Homeland."

into the valley of the Stiffkey River between Warham and Wighton, a visit can be paid to a really fine and almost perfect earthwork called the Danish Camp. This camp is a nearly circular space of about 9 acres, enclosed by a double rampart about 20 feet high. The Rev. E. A. Downman, who made a survey of it a short time ago, states that while protected on the south-west by the river and its marshlands, upon the north-east its position is by nature weak, the land outside the enclosure being higher than that within. The south-west portion of the rampart seems to have been destroyed to make the present course of the river; for, as Mr. Downman has pointed out, if that side had depended for its protection upon the river, the entrenchments would have run at right angles to the south-west instead of running in a complete circle. Local tradition asserts that this earthwork was constructed by the Danes after they landed at Weybourn, and as a meadow near by is called Sweno's Meadow, it has been inferred that the camp was made by the Danish leader Sweyn. The most remarkable thing about this Warham camp is its excellent preservation, due, in all probability, to its ramparts being made of chalk. Systematic excavation alone can determine the precise period of its construction.

CHAPTER XIII

WELLS, BINHAM, AND WALSINGHAM

"Sharp and soft in many a curve and line
Gleam and glow the sea-coloured marsh mosses,
Salt and splendid from the circling brine.
Streak on streak of glimmering seashine crosses
All the land sea-saturate as with wine."

A. C. SWINBURNE.

WELLS, where we again come in touch with the railway, is a dull little town of about 2,500 inhabitants. Although it is often called Wells-by-the-Sea, one has to trudge along a mile of banked-up road to reach the beach, which in turn is cut off from the sea at low tide by an oozy channel leading up to the quay. A street so narrow that two carts can pass each other only with difficulty leads to the slumbrous quay—the only spot where one cares to linger; elsewhere the town is uninteresting, without even an ancient church to give it some semblance of dignity. For in 1879 the fine fifteenth-century church was almost entirely destroyed by fire, and although in its rebuilding the old work was as nearly as possible reproduced, it naturally lacks the interest that formerly attached to it. A gravestone in the

churchyard is worth noting. It is dated 1744 and bears the lines—

> "Though winds and waves have tost me to and fro,
> By God's decree I harbour here below;
> Where I do ride with many of our Fleet,
> Ready to sail our Admiral Christ to meet."

As a seaport Wells is probably as thriving to-day as it has ever been, while as a fishing port it is most noted for its shell-fish, the taking of which finds employment for a few men throughout the year. Small quantities of skates and rays are caught by lining, and occasionally good numbers of sea trout are netted,

The sea stories told here are chiefly sad ones. On the 29th of October, 1880, thirteen men manned the lifeboat *Eliza Adams*, and having rescued the crew of one ship, they were on their way, in the teeth of a gale, to save another crew, when the boat capsized and eleven gallant fellows were drowned. A monument to their memory has been erected on the quay, at the landward end of the "promenade." Another disaster occurred on the 22nd of February, 1898, when the gunboat *Alarm* arrived off Wells with stores for the coastguard. Five coastguardsmen were on their way to the gunboat when their boat upset and they all lost their lives. This sad catastrophe led to another; for when the coastguard boat did not arrive in response to signals from the *Alarm*, the gunboat's gig was launched to convey the stores ashore. The gig also capsized, and Sub-Lieutenant Lowther and five of the gunboat's crew were drowned. The church registers contain a brief but curious reference to a shipwreck that occurred here as long ago as 1583, when, so the entry runs, "Misled

uppo' ye West Coaste coming from Spain; whose deathes were brought to pas by the detestable working of an execrable witch of King's Lynn, whose name was Mother Gabley; by the boyling, or rather labouring of certeyne eggs in a payle full of colde water; afterwards approved sufficiently at the arraignment of the said witch." To this entry are appended the names of thirteen men who were lost by the foundering of their ship.

Most of the wrecks on this part of the coast have occurred on the Great Barrier Sand. "The wrecks," writes Mr. C. J. Cornish, in his "Nights with an Old Gunner," "are the ancient ruins of this shifting realm of sand. For ten, twenty, thirty years they have been fixed in the bank, as firmly as if held in molten lead. Like ruined castles each has its history, accurately remembered in the history of the coast. Scarcely one of the crews has ever lived to reach the shore, for no lifeboat can cross the sand into which the wrecks drift at high water, and no man can swim through the miles of shallow surf. One wreck was full of frozen Lascars, whose black corpses, wrapped in shreds of cotton cloth, were washed up day by day on the snow which covered the High Sand. Another is the ruin of a sailing ship of the largest size—the *Pensacola*—loaded with immense balks of timber; she came ashore with smashed hull and her crew drowned, and grounded on the bank. There she lies yet, the deck facing the shore, her bottom filled with sand, her copper bolts green as malachite, and in her hold large logs of tropical timber packed and wedged with pebbles, weed, and shells. Mile after mile, from wreck to wreck of ship, ketch, brigantine, barque, schooner, and smack the same story might be told."

Although Wells itself is uninteresting, its wide tract of meal marsh, stretching away from the harbour to the sand-hills and shingle banks which border the beach, have plenty of interest for the lover of wild birds and for the botanist who wishes to add to his collection of plants some species peculiar to the salt marshes. A footpath running eastward from the quay takes a circuitous course into the midst of the meals, but they can be reached more directly by rowing across the channel near the quay. They are quite unlike anything to be found elswhere along the coast; they are neither mud flat nor true salt marsh. Nor are they wholly reclaimed land; for although the water is usually confined to channels, creeks, and drains, occasionally, when a breach is made in the sand-hills, or an exceptionally high tide occurs, they are partly submerged. Dotted about the drier tracts, and especially noticeable just within the Wells sand-hills, are little low thickets of shrubby sea blite, a rare shrub concerning which there is a tradition, like that attaching to the Suffolk sea pea, that the first seeds were washed ashore from a wrecked ship. But the chief floral feature of the meals is the abundant growth of sea lavender; its mauve blossoms cover many acres during July and August. Along the banks of the creeks and drains, the sea orache (*Atriplex portulacoides*), locally known as "crabgrass," grows freely, and is remarkable for the change in hue its leaves undergo: in early summer they have a crimson tint, at midsummer a frosted appearance, and in autumn they turn bright yellow and, after falling, are strewn over the ooze and along the tide-marks of the creeks. A rare plant, found only



WELLS QUAY.

[*To face p.* 244.

on the East Coast of England, is the stalked orache (*Atriplex pedunculata*), while another rather rare flower, characteristic of these "moorlands of the sea," is the little pink-blossomed sea heath. Among the commoner species that help to give to the meals that wealth of colour for which they are remarkable are the dainty sea pink, the fragrant sea southernwood and the mauve-flowered sea starwort.

The line of sand-hills extending eastward of the harbour between the meals and the beach is inhabited during the nesting season by a large number of common terns, which here, thanks to the Wells Wild Birds Protection Society, are so well protected by a paid watcher that they are undisturbed by human nest-raiders, thousands of young birds being hatched off every year. From mid-May to mid-July is the best time to visit this interesting bird colony, but care must be exercised, owing to the nests being dotted about almost everywhere on the sand and shingle. Some lesser terns and a considerable number of redshanks and ringed plovers also benefit by the vigilance of the watcher, who, during the nesting season, inhabits a little houseboat, moored in a salt drain at the back of the dunes. Seaward of the sand-hills, on the gleaming sandy flat from which the tide ebbs, a few lug-worm gatherers are to be seen every day during some months of the year, collecting bait for the anglers who fish from the Lowestoft and Yarmouth piers; there, also, the long stake-nets are set up, by means of which large quantities of wild-fowl are taken during dark autumn and winter nights.

From the point of view of the wild-fowler, the neighbourhood of Wells is chiefly remarkable for

the wild geese that spend the winter in feeding and resting in the fields and marshes and on the sand-banks lying off the coast. Usually these fine birds begin to arrive about the end of October, and by the middle of November some thousands of them are to be seen every day, passing to and fro over the meals, filling the air with their loud "honking" and cackling. Their arrival is the signal for the shore-gunner to bestir himself; for it means that the fowling season has come. It is a dreary land that he has to traverse, exposed to the blighting chill of the keen north-easter as it blows from off the grey North Sea; but there is a fascination in its forsaken flats which others have felt besides the hardy fowler who wanders mile after mile over ragged sand-ridges and marish meals.

Almost everything is "fair game" which comes within range of the shore-gunner's fowling-piece, but it is the sight of the wild grey geese flighting in the dawnlight or the gloaming which delights his heart, the more, perhaps, because he knows that it is often no easy matter to shoot them. Notwithstanding their size, they are not easily distinguished in the dim light; for their plumage is of the hue of the wintry sky and the misty sea. Often, it is more by ear than by eye that the fowler becomes aware of their approach, and if they did not keep continually calling while on the wing many of them would pass overhead unseen. Yet when flighting over the sand-hills they seldom rise higher than 20 or 30 feet in the air.

Just after the sun has set, and when the tide is slowly flooding up the beach, is the best time to lie in wait for the geese. As daylight fades and the

mist gathers over the sea, the air becomes filled with the strange cries of the flighting fowl. Concealed behind the sea-wall, or in some hollow of the sand-hills, the gunner listens for the wild calling of the geese, and presently the weird clanging comes to him out of the gloom. He strains his eyes seaward towards the submerged sand-bank, and suddenly a line of vague, grey shapes rushes through the air, just visible against the sky. One moment they are crying above the sand-hills, another moment they are gone; but as they pass the crack and flash of a breechloader come from the midst of the wiry maram-grass of the sand-ridge, followed by a loud thud on the adjoining flat. One of the wild grey geese has flown its last flight. "Ah! they do come down a wollop," said a Wells gunner. "One of 'em came down on to a house not long ago, and sent th' tiles a-flying in all directions."

The characteristic bird of the meals in winter is the hooded crow—the raven of the mist-mantled marshlands and lonely foreshores. It usually avoids the neighbourhood of man, save when he carries a gun in his hand and may chance to provide a victim for the wary bird that follows him over the dunes and along the sea-wall. To the wounded wader and the crippled rock bird, its rasping croak is a boding sound—the voice of a ghoul—and the injured bird crouches in the maram-grass or drags itself under some rock-ledge in the vain hope of escaping the corvine prowler's eye. From August till November small parties of hooded crows are constantly leaving their Russian home and arriving on the East Coast, while during the latter days of October and the first week in November such hordes of them often come in that

they seem for a time to outnumber the immigrant rooks. Most of them, when they have made the oversea passage, abandon for a while the gregarious habit, each going its own way and attending to its own needs; so that on the mud-flats of an estuary, along the tide-mark of a lonely shore, amid the ooze-heaps made by the marshland dyke-drawer, and in the fields into which the fish offal is carted from the fishing ports, you may see solitary grey-backs feeding ravenously, caring little how foul may be the carrion they consume. The meals and marshes of Norfolk are favourite haunts of this bird, which is known to the marshmen as the Danish or the Kentish crow. During misty November its harsh "kwah, kwah" is as familiar a sound there as the wail of the lapwing; and when a cold snap fills the marshes with snipe, the gunner must be on the alert, or "Hoodie" will profit by his prowess. The duck-shooter, too, occasionally finds this grey-backed crow far too well acquainted with his business, and should a wounded duck fall on the "wrong" side of a dyke, it will be half-eaten before the gunner or his dog can reach it. No taxidermist can make a cleaner job of skinning a bird than Hoodie does after he has once driven his powerful bill into its breast. When the beach is strewn with dead guillemots, puffins, and, now and again, little auks, as is sometimes the case after a winter storm, the grey crow soon becomes aware of it, and in a few hours nothing is left of these victims of the storm save the heads and feet and the clean-picked bones and skin. Often, it would seem, this ghoulish bird makes a night patrol of the shore as soon as the tide ebbs; for at daybreak its footprints can be traced all along the tide-mark, where, during the

winter, they are more frequently met with than those of any other bird.

Apparently, it is a moody bird, easily influenced by climatic changes. When the sun shines brightly, when the river ripples are agleam and when the reed-beds are as yellow as a field of ripe corn, it is brisk, almost playful, in its movements, and it will even pause in the midst of a meal to give expression to its contentment by a series of convulsive "kwahs"; but when the fog lies dense upon the marshes, or the rain pours down into a grey mist, it will perch for hours on the dead top of a storm-rent willow, surveying listlessly the depressing scene and making not a sound. At such times the grey crow is the embodiment of dismal dejection, and a very different bird from that which occupies the same position on a fine day. Then from its aerial point of vantage it will keep a sharp look-out for any movement of furred or feathered life in the marsh, and should a field mouse stir in the swamp grass, a vole move amid the rushes, or a crippled wader show itself on the muddy margin of a dyke, it will descend upon it in a swift slanting swoop, and the small beast or bird is lucky if it escape into safe hiding. In executing this sudden swoop, the grey crow somewhat resembles the Clarke's crow of the American cañons, though in this country it cannot, through lack of heights to descend from, make such long descents as does the American bird.

In turning from the wild life of the Wells coast to the places of interest lying a little way inland of the town, Binham Priory and the ruins of the famous Augustinian priory at Walsingham are

especially worthy of being visited, the former on account of its fine Norman and Early English work, the latter because a spot that was the Mecca of so many kingly and other pilgrims must needs have an interest for every stranger who sets out to explore North Norfolk.

Binham is about five miles south-east of Wells, the only parishes lying between it and the coast town being Warham St. Mary and Warham All Saints, the latter chiefly interesting for its old camp, which has already been described. The remaining portions of the priory are the nave of its church (now used as the parish church), part of the west front, ruinated portions of the transepts, aisles, chancel and tower, and fragments of the dormitory, chapter-house, refectory, and west gate. The nave is Norman, with the exception of the three westernmost bays of the triforium and clerestory, which are Early English; finer work of the latter period can be seen in the west front, which has a rich arcade, surmounted by a large window. Among the noteworthy features of the church are a beautiful but mutilated font and the remains of a rood screen with panel paintings of SS. Katharine, Agnes, Appolonia, Sitha, Sebastian, Christopher and others. At the time of the Reformation this screen was painted white and covered with texts from Tyndale's version of the Bible. The priory was founded by Peter de Valoines and his wife Albreda in the eleventh century as a cell to the Benedictine abbey at St. Albans, to which it had to pay a mark of silver every year, while it also had to provide for the reception of the Abbot of St. Albans and for not more than thirteen of his horses when he paid it an annual visit. The

most eventful time in its history was the second year of the reign of King John, when Robert, Lord Fitzwalter, demanded that Prior Thomas, whom the Abbot of St. Albans had deposed because he had sided with Fitzwalter in a dispute about the ownership of a wood, should be reinstated. This the Abbot refused to do; so Fitzwalter, according to Matthew Paris, laid siege to the priory and reduced the monks to a state bordering on starvation. News of these proceedings reached King John, who forcibly expressed his indignation at Fitzwalter's high-handed doings. "No! by God's feet," he exclaimed, "either I or Fitzwalter must be King of England! No! by God's feet, who ever heard of such things in peaceful times in a Christian land?" He at once despatched an armed force to the relief of the monks, and the rebellious baron had to seek safety in flight. In 1224 the west gate, still called the Gaol Gate, was used as a prison to which was committed Alexander de Langley, a monk of St. Albans, whom too much study had made raving mad. Previous to his incarceration here, he was flogged by the Abbot of St. Albans "to the copious effusion of blood," and this proving to be no cure for his madness he was kept fettered in solitary confinement till he died. At the dissolution of the monasteries, the priory was granted to Thomas Paston, and one of his descendants, Edward Paston, is said to have destroyed the domestic buildings in order that he might build a house for himself. While the work of demolition was going on, a wall fell and killed a workman. This was taken to be a bad omen; so the idea of building a house here was abandoned, a new position for it being chosen at

Appleton, where a splendid manor-house (which was destroyed by fire in 1707) was erected on the site now occupied by the Norfolk home of the King of Norway.

The subterranean-passage legend is a favourite one in this part of Norfolk; so it is not surprising to learn that a passage beneath the ground is said to connect the priories of Binham and Walsingham. The direction it takes could formerly be traced by following the course taken by a long green bank that crossed several meadows and which, wherever it crossed a road, gave forth the inevitable "hollow sound." From Walsingham to Binham, along this bank, a spectre known as the Black Monk walked every night, shaking his head and appearing to look for something he could not find. A daring fiddler—perhaps the Blakeney one—is reported to have descended into the Binham tunnel and to have been carried off by the Black Monk. Since then the spectre has never been seen.

From Binham village green, where an old cross is supposed to mark the spot where a weekly market and an annual fair were held, it is not a very "far cry" to Little Walsingham, a small but pleasant town in the vale of the Stiffkey River, still possessing several houses that probably sheltered pilgrims who came to the famous shrine. Only fragments, including the great east window of the church, the refectory, and a Perpendicular gateway abutting on the High Street, remain of the magnificent Augustinian priory that arose around the shrine containing that wonder-working image of Our Lady of Walsingham, but by setting foot within the precincts of a monastery that was visited by many of the Kings of England one is

brought closely in touch with the past and reminded of the days when all the roads in the Eastern counties led to Walsingham. "Four hundred years ago," writes Mr. T. H. Bryant, "the Shrine of Our Lady numbered its annual pilgrims by hundreds and thousands, and it is said that in the fifteenth century there were even more votaries who knelt at this Shrine than at that of S. Thomas of Canterbury. At nearly all the country villages for ten or twelve miles round were roadside crosses erected as resting-places and guide-posts for the travellers, and in the grounds of the old Castle at Lynn is a wayside chapel, which was built especially as a place to which pilgrims from beyond the Wash might repair, in order to hear Mass before finishing their journey. . . . The principal road taken by pilgrims from the south passed by Newmarket, Brandon, and Fakenham, and is still known as the 'Palmer's Way' and the 'Walsingham Green Way.' From the north they came across the Wash, near Long Sutton, going through Lynn and taking the road passing the priories of Flitcham, Roudham, and Cokesford. Another road led from the east through Norwich and Attleborough by Bec Hospital, where gratuitous accommodation was provided nightly for thirteen pilgrims. Chapels, at which other pilgrims called, were to be found at Southacre, Westacre, Hilborough, Caston, and Stanhoe, besides many of less note." With so many guide-posts and wayside houses of rest there can have been few persons who had occasion to quote the words of the old ballad—

> "Gentle herdman tell to me
> Of curtesy I thee pray,
> Unto the towne of Walsingham
> Which is the right and ready way."

Briefly summarised, the history of Walsingham Priory is as follows: About the year 1061 the widow of Richard de Faverches founded here a chapel in honour of the Virgin. Sir Geoffrey de Faverches, the son of the foundress, subsequently endowed it, and on the day before he started on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem he founded and united with the chapel a priory for canons regular of the Augustinian order. The original chapel was a small wooden building, believed to be a copy of the Sancta Casa at Nazareth. The monks affirmed that it was the Sancta Casa itself, and when Nazareth fell into the hands of the Mohammedans, a rumour was spread abroad that the Virgin had deserted her home in the Holy Land and taken up her abode in the Walsingham shrine. The image of Our Lady, which was set up in it, was placed upon a toad, indicating her victory over evil. Erasmus, who visited Walsingham in 1511, and who wrote an amusing account of the stories told by the monks to credulous pilgrims, says of the chapel: "It is built of wood, and pilgrims are admitted through a narrow door at each side. There is but little or no light in it but what proceeds from wax tapers yielding a most pleasant and odoriferous smell, but if you look in you will say it is the seat of the gods, so bright and shining as it is all over with jewels, gold and silver." Among the relics preserved in the chapel, the most treasured was some of the Virgin's milk, which was kept in a crystal ampoule. There was also a joint of St. Peter's finger, so large that Erasmus, on seeing it, exclaimed that St. Peter must have been a very big man. Kings Henry III., Edward I., Edward II., Henry VII., and Bruce of Scotland were among

the royal pilgrims to the shrine, while Henry VIII. walked here barefooted from the manor-house at East Barsham. Margaret Paston, in 1443, when her husband was lying ill in the Inner Temple, wrote to him that her "moder be hestyd a nodyr ymmage of wax of the weytte of yow to oyer Lady of Walsingham . . . and I have be hestyd to gon on pylgreymmays to Walsingham, and to Sent Levenardys for yow"; while in another letter of the famous Paston series the writer thanks John Paston "specially that ye do so moche for Oure Ladyes House at Walsyngham." Endowments and the offerings of pilgrims made the priory exceptionally rich—in one year the offerings alone amounted to £3,000 of our money—and it may be that it was a consequence of its being so wealthy that it became, early in the sixteenth century, the most disorderly and demoralised religious house in the county. When it was dissolved, its yearly revenue amounted to about £5,000 present money. The site was then sold to Thomas Sidney, the governor of a hospital at Walsingham, "for the use of the people," but he kept it, we are told, for himself.

A long day can be profitably spent in exploring Walsingham; for there is much to see besides the ruins of the priory. Not far from the station, in the higher part of the town, there are some remains of another monastery, a Franciscan house founded in 1346 by Elizabeth de Burgh, Countess of Clare. These ruins are chiefly contained in a private garden, while parts of them have been converted into a farmhouse. The remains of the cloister are particularly interesting. Walsingham Church, a large cruciform building, contains perhaps the finest Perpendicular font in England;

also some remarkably interesting monuments, that of Sir Henry Sidney being exceedingly fine, while on a tablet inscribed "Dormitorium Edwardi de Fotherbye" there is represented a bedstead with curtains. Two other tablets, to members of the Lee Warner family, are by Sir R. Westmacott, R.A. Near to the church are the "Wishing Wells," the waters of which are said to have sprung up at the command of the Virgin. These wells, which gained their name from the "fact" that any person who drank of them obtained, under certain restrictions, everything he wished for, were formerly sheltered by a roof under which pilgrims knelt when they threw their money into the water and prayed for the fulfilment of their wishes. We are assured by Mr. Hooper that "Even the casual visitor of to-day may expect to have one single wish granted if he will strictly observe the orthodox conditions. He must not speak after coming within a certain distance of the wells, he must kneel first at one well, then at the other in turn, as he drinks the water, above all, he must not let a soul know what his wish is—in short, don't speak, don't tell, kneel, drink and wish. As the least flaw is fatal it is best to obtain accurate directions on the spot, lest the ceremonies should be imperfectly carried out."

There are two beautiful buildings within about two miles of Walsingham which claim the attention of visitors to the site of the famous shrine. These are East Barsham Manor-house, a rich example of Tudor ornamental brickwork, and a wayside chapel at Houghton-in-the-Dale. The latter is commonly known as the "Shoe House," the tradition being that pilgrims to Walsingham, on reaching this exquisite little chapel, took off

their shoes and performed the remainder of their journey with bare feet. For many years it was used for secular purposes, being at one time a cottage, another, a barn; but about twelve years ago it was purchased by a wealthy Roman Catholic lady, who restored it. It has since been re-dedicated.

CHAPTER XIV

HOLKHAM AND BURNHAM THORPE

"Coke little recks of low or high,
Coats fine or jackets barely worn;
The Landlord of Holkham ne'er looks down
On the humble grower of barley-corn."
Norfolk Song.

"Thine island loves thee well, thou famous man,
The greatest sailor since our world began."
TENNYSON.

THE visitor to Wells, who, from the banked-up pathway leading down to the shore, looks westward along the landward margin of the marshes, sees, rising above the dense foliage of what seems to be a belt of woodland, a lofty column. With the aid of field-glasses, he may also see that the object surmounting this column is not a statue of a famous soldier or sailor, nor a figure obviously symbolical of victories won on land or sea: it is simply a carving of a wheat-sheaf, which might adorn the entrance to a corn exchange. That wheat-sheaf, however, symbolises victory, and just as Norfolk men may be justly proud of the hero in whose honour another monument was erected on the Yarmouth shore, so they may well revere the memory of the man whose deeds the wheat-sheaf

symbolises and in whose honour this other monument was set up on the Holkham shore. Nelson, whose birthplace is within a mile or so of Holkham, was the greatest of admirals, and Thomas William Coke, first Earl of Leicester of Holkham, whom men still call "Coke of Norfolk," was the greatest of agriculturists. Peace has its victories as well as war, and "Coke of Norfolk" was a great benefactor of his country inasmuch as he fought for its best interests yet won his victories on bloodless fields. While other leaders, in the service of their country, were laying waste with fire and sword, he was making a desert fruitful and showing men what conquests might be made by those who choose to labour in the paths of peace.

The great Holkham estate, upon which we are now entering, has been well described as "one of the wonders of East Anglia, if not, indeed, of England as a whole." How it became so famous will be learnt presently; meanwhile it may be interesting to set down the legend of how Holkham came by its name. It was, we are told, one of the estates held by King Anna of East Anglia, who was killed whilst fighting against Penda, the pagan King of Mercia; and it was here that his fourth and youngest child Withburga spent her childhood. She was a devout maiden, and at an early age attained so great a reputation for saintliness that even during her childhood the village became known as *Hoeligham*, or Holy Home, and afterwards it was known for some time as Withburgstowe, or the place of Withburga. Hoeligham, or Holkham, however, became its settled name, and in later years, when Withburga had founded a nunnery at East Dereham, received

miraculous tokens of Divine favour, died, and been canonised, a church was built here and dedicated to her. The story of how Brithnoth, Abbot of Ely, had her incorrupt body stolen from its tomb at Dereham and reinterred beside that of her more famous sister, St. Etheldreda, in Ely Cathedral is familiar to every one who has read the story of "Ely's sacred fane."

At the time of the Norman Conquest a Dane named Kettle was the principal lord of Holkham. After the Conquest there were many manorial changes, but the one fated to be the most momentous did not take place until 1659, when John Coke, fourth son of Sir Edward Coke, the famous Lord Chief Justice, married Merial, the granddaughter and heiress of William Wheatley, and so became possessed of the greater part of the manor. He left a son who died childless, and the estate then passed to Robert, a great-grandson of Sir Edward, who married a daughter of Thomas, Duke of Leeds. Robert Coke died at the early age of twenty-nine, leaving an only son, Edward, who became the father of several children, of whom Thomas, the eldest, was the builder of Holkham Hall.

The Hall, one of the most wonderful and magnificent buildings in England, was built by Kent and Matthew Brettingham, but it undoubtedly owes to Thomas Coke, who was an appreciative student of Italian architecture, some of its classical and artistic details. For sixteen years he was studying and developing his designs, and whilst he was in Italy he familiarised himself with those of the principal classical buildings of that country. At first it was his intention to use Bath stone, but finding that the bricks made of a brick-



HOLKHAM HALL.

[*To face p.* 260.

earth at Burnham Norton, a parish a few miles from Holkham, acquired, when dry and seasoned, much the same hue and texture as a very durable brick made in Rome, he decided to use only the local bricks for his palatial house. The laying of the foundations was begun in 1734, and it is said that they were made so firm that as many bricks were used below the ground as above it.

The plan of the house, which consists of a large central building and four wings, was taken, with modifications, from a design by Palladio. Its north and south fronts each measure 344 feet in length, the chief entrance being in the north front, before which have been placed a bronze lion and a lioness by the late Sir J. E. Boehm. The south front has in the centre an imposing portico, with an entablature supported by eight Corinthian columns. All the state-rooms are on the first floor, connected by corridors 344 feet in length; only the turrets have rooms above the first storey. A rustic basement, with square windows, contains the servants' quarters, and beneath it are the bakehouse, dairy, and other offices. The house actually presents four fronts, in each of which are small arched doorways, while on either side of the principal windows are columns of the same design as those of the south front. Over the main doorway, inside, is the following inscription:—

"This seat on an open, barren estate
was planned, planted, built, decorated, and inhabited
ye middle of ye eighteenth
century
By Thomas Coke, Earl of Leicester."

Mrs. C. Stirling, a descendant of "Coke of Norfolk," writes of the Hall: "One characteristic

must surely strike even the most casual observer of the exterior of Holkham. There is no pandering to the picturesque, no conforming to conventional standards of beauty or of fitness. All is solid, plain, impressive, unusual. Holkham stands alone, a law unto itself. There is something defiant in its uncompromising simplicity. Looking at it, one seems to trace there the personality of the man who created it, the spirit of that race of whose genius it is the expression. And although for this reason it may not appeal to universal taste, yet in its originality, in its handsome, spacious solidity, it is curiously in harmony with the open barren estate on which it was first erected—with the land where to-day, despite rich fields and magnificent timber, Nature itself is stern and uncompromising rather than endowed with any conventional prettiness."

The interior is as beautiful as the exterior is impressive. The hall, which rises to a height of 50 feet in a splendid dome with decorations after the manner of Inigo Jones, was designed from Palladio's plan of an ancient basilica, the Ionic columns on either side, resting on a base of alabaster, being copies of those of the temple of Fortuna Virilis at Rome. A gallery surrounds it on three sides, supported by a basement bordered with black marble and inlaid with white alabaster. The walls are now adorned with bas-reliefs and alto-reliefs by Nollekens, Westmacott, and Chantrey, while in the niches are antique classical statues. A semicircular opening, representing the apse of the basilica, contains a flight of steps leading up to the saloon. On either side of it is a marble bust, one of the builder of Holkham, the other of "Coke of Norfolk." To quote Mrs.

Stirling again, the hall shows "perfection of design and delicacy of execution. Each detail is a masterpiece; the whole conveys an impression of lightness, of richness and of grace to which it is difficult to do justice. The classical beauty of proportion; the exquisite dome with its wonderful decorations; the grace of the columns; the general wealth of colour, of light and of harmony is unparalleled. In its marvellous conception and its masterly workmanship it is one of the most triumphant revivals of classical art."

The hall, the statue gallery, and the lofty state-rooms are remarkable not only for their beautiful decorations but for their priceless art treasures. Some of the finest statuary in the world is preserved here; also pictures by the world's greatest masters. Most of these were collected by the builder of the Hall, either during his travels on the Continent or after the building of the Hall was completed, and in securing some of the statues he ran considerable risks, owing to the vigilance of the Italian Government, which would not allow such national treasures to be taken out of the country. Indeed, after paying £1,500 for a beautiful headless figure of Diana, which is believed to have belonged to Cicero, he was arrested and imprisoned because he sent it secretly to Florence. This lovely statue, however, to which an eminent Italian sculptor added a head and some fingers, was eventually conveyed in safety to Holkham, where it is prized as being one of the finest specimens of classical drapery in existence. A Neptune, in Parian marble, pronounced by Dr. Waagen to be the most important extant statue of that deity; a Venus, of which the same authority said that "of all similar statues which have come

down to us, not even excepting that in the Louvre, formerly at Versailles, this perhaps deserves the preference"; a beautiful Faun, found in the Campagna; an original likeness of Thucydides, a remarkable Silenus, and a magnificent head of Aphrodite are also among the antique sculptures in the gallery. The pictures include Rubens's "Return from the Flight into Egypt," and a portrait of the artist's daughter, a splendid Vandyck of the Duc d'Arenberg on horseback, "The Sacrifice of Isaac," by Domenicheno, landscapes by Claude Lorraine, Nicholas and Gaspar Poussin, Salvator Rosa, and Vernet, and works of Michael Angelo, Paul Veronese, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Guido Reni and Carlo Maratti. Among the portraits, by Gainsborough, Lely, Sir J. Reynolds, Opie and other famous artists, are those of Charles James Fox, Dr. Parr, the poet Waller, Chief Justice Coke, and many members of the Coke family, including a life-sized portrait of Thomas William Coke, painted and presented to him by command of Louise, the wife of Charles Edward, the Young Pretender. In the background of this picture is painted a statue of a reclining Ariadne, the face of which is said to bear a close resemblance to that of the Pretender's Queen, with whom Thomas Coke, then young and exceedingly handsome, danced when he met her in Rome in 1772. Horace Walpole, in writing to Conway in 1774, remarked of Thomas William Coke, that "the Pretender's Queen has permitted him to have her picture," and it is believed that the Holkham picture is the one he referred to.

The builder of Holkham was a student of classical authors, and a collector of literary treasures. In consequence, the fine library at

Holkham possesses many valuable MSS. Among Roman historians, Livy seems to have been his favourite, and his collection of the works of Livy in manuscript and in print is probably unrivalled. There are also many Missals and illuminated MSS., one of the chief treasures of the manuscript library being Leonardo da Vinci's treatise on the Martisana Canal, written in his own hand. The library includes that of Lord Chief Justice Coke. After the death of Thomas Coke, this fine collection of books and MSS. was somewhat neglected until William Roscoe, the author of the "Life of Lorenzo de Medici," was commissioned by "Coke of Norfolk" to rearrange and catalogue it.

As a follower of Sir Robert Walpole, Thomas Coke showed some political capacity, and in the course of a few years he became a Knight of the Bath, Baron Lovel of Minster Lovel in Oxford, and finally Earl of Leicester. The tragedy of his life was his being destined to see all save one of his children die quite young, and the survivor, whom he was also fated to outlive, became irreclaimably dissolute. This was his son Edward, Viscount Coke, of whom Horace Walpole wrote that "Lord Coke has demolished himself very fast," and whose death, in 1753, left the owner of Holkham childless. Then it was that, although he still took a pride in the splendid house he had built, he could not look upon it without sadness. "It is," he said, "a melancholy thing to stand alone in one's own country. I look around, not a house to be seen but my own. I am Giant of Giant Castle, and have ate up all my neighbours—my nearest neighbour is the King of Denmark." His death, too, was a tragedy, and a mysterious one.

Despite his isolation at Holkham, he was dragged into a quarrel with Colonel (afterwards Marquess) Townshend, a man thirty years his junior, the cause of their dispute being, apparently, some disparaging remarks made by Lord Leicester concerning the Militia. A challenge was sent by Townshend while heated with drink, and although its recipient replied to it in a fatherly way, ridiculing the idea of such an "old fellow" as himself, entirely out of practice in handling the sword, fighting a young officer in the prime of his life, he seems, in the end, to have been compelled to meet his challenger, by whom he was fatally wounded. No account of the duel has been preserved, but it must have been fought between January 24, 1759, when the challenge was sent, and February 15th, the day on which Townshend sailed for America to take part in the siege of Quebec. On April 20th Lord Leicester died, and from a letter written about that time by the Rev. Edmund Pyle, but not printed until a few years ago, it seems clear that his death resulted from the duel. It is noteworthy that n "The Military Life of Field Marshal George, First Marquess Townshend," issued in 1901, there is no mention of any duel having been fought between Townshend and his Norfolk neighbour.

The widow of Thomas Coke continued to reside at Holkham, and in accordance with the instructions of her husband's will the sum of £2,000 was annually expended in completing the building of the house, the last brick being laid in 1765. Ten years later Lady Leicester died, and the estate devolved upon her nephew, Wenman Coke, of Longford, in Derbyshire, from whom,

about a year later, it passed to his son, Thomas William Coke.

Like his ancestor Thomas, Lord Leicester, Thomas William Coke took a prominent part in politics, but his fame rests upon what he did for agriculture. He transformed the "open, barren estate" at Holkham into one of the most productive in the kingdom; he planted woodlands to such an extent as to gain for himself the nickname of "Prince Pinery," and the "Prince of Pines"; and not only did he make his own lands fruitful, but he set an example that was followed by most of the landowners and farmers in North Norfolk, with the result that a bleak and sterile country where, it was believed, not an ear of wheat could be grown, became remarkably fertile. When Mrs. Coke told Lady Townshend that she was going down to Norfolk, that witty old lady remarked, "Then, my dear, all you will see will be one blade of grass, and two rabbits fighting for that!" Wherever the land was cultivated, it was in a way that further impoverished the already starved soil; where sheep were kept they were wretched-looking starvelings; and in many parishes the appearance of a milch cow would have sent the children screaming to their mothers, believing they had seen a wild beast. Even Holkham had no cattle on its 3,000 acres, while its eight hundred sheep could only be fed with difficulty. All this "Coke of Norfolk" determined to alter. He had the rich marl that underlay the sandy surface soil dug up and spread over the land; instead of impoverishing his fields by growing three white crops in succession—as the local farmers had done from time immemorial—he grew two crops and then kept the land in pasture for

two years; where there had previously been insufficient food for eight hundred sheep, "with backs as narrow as rabbits," he, in course of time, maintained a splendid flock of 2,500 Southdowns; and, acting on the advice of the Duke of Bedford, he began to rear Devon cattle, two of which, he found, cost him no more to fatten than did one short-horned beast. At the end of about forty years he had so changed the aspect of the Holkham estate, that no one who had known it when it first came into his possession could have recognised it. Woodlands of oak, Spanish chestnut and beech covered hundreds of acres of what had been a barren wilderness, and before he died he had the unique experience of setting foot on board a ship at Wells, which had been built of wood grown from acorns of his own planting. Another work in which he specially interested himself was the reclaiming of land from the sea. As early as 1660 his ancestor, John Coke, had reclaimed 360 acres of Holkham salt marsh, and 400 acres more were embanked and drained by his successor. Yet when Thomas William Coke came to live at Holkham the sea still ebbed and flowed over a portion of what is now the park, and he soon realised that the extensive meal marshes bordering the coast might be turned to good use. Before he died a further 700 acres had been won from the sea; corn was growing on what had been shingle and sand covered daily by the tide, and the large and beautiful sheet of water in the park, which had been an arm of the sea, was converted into a lake nearly a mile long. At the sheep-shearing dinners, his efforts in the direction of land-reclaiming were sometimes humorously referred to in a toast "The Enclosing of all Waists!"

The famous sheep-shearing gatherings, "Coke's Clippings," were inaugurated in 1778, and for forty-three years they were the gala-days of the agricultural year. Originating as friendly meetings of farmers to discuss agricultural matters, they grew in fame and importance until not only landowners and farmers from all parts of Great Britain, but also celebrated men from many foreign countries were glad to be present at them. In 1817 two thousand persons sat down to the dinners; in 1821, when the last of the Clippings was held, no fewer than seven thousand were present. "Of the munificence which planned and maintained such meetings as the sheep-shearings," said a contemporary writer, "which opened the halls of Holkham to thousands during the week; of the festivals to the great, the learned, the scientific, and the curious; of the warm and noble hospitality which makes that mansion the abode of unbounded cheerfulness; of the frank reception given to his tenantry, to the yeomanry at large, and to every man connected with agriculture, it is needless to speak: all these truths are known, and have placed the character of Mr. Coke at the very top of the list of England's country gentlemen and England's landlords." "In all Europe," said the Duke of Bedford, "I found nothing like England; and in all England nothing like Holkham." At the last of the Clippings, notwithstanding the preparations going on for the coronation of George IV., the Dukes of Sussex, Norfolk, and Bedford, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, the American Minister and the French Consul were included in the house-party, and agriculturists from America, Russia, Nova Scotia, France, Sweden, and Poland arrived on one or

another day of the gathering. Richard Rush, the American Minister, afterwards wrote: "The Sheep-shearing conveys, in itself, but a limited idea of what is witnessed at Holkham. The operations embrace everything connected with agriculture in the broadest sense; such as an inspection of all the farms which make up the Holkham estate, with the modes of tillage practised on each for all varieties of crops; an exhibition of cattle with the modes of keeping and feeding them; ploughing matches; hay-making; a display of agricultural implements and modes of using them; the visiting of various out-buildings, stables, and so on, best adapted to good farming, and the rearing and care of horses and stock; with much more that I am unable to specify. Sheep-shearing there was, indeed, but it was only one item in this full round of practical agriculture. The whole lasted three days, occupying the morning of each, until dinner time. The shearing of the sheep was the closing operation of the third day. Such is the general scene, so far as agriculture is concerned, which is its primary object. Mr. Coke explains to his guests and friends all his processes and results. This is done without form, in conversation on his grounds, or at the dinner-table; and, even more impressively, on horseback. Then it is that you have more of the part of the old English Gentleman as he rides from field to field, and farm to farm, attended by his friends, who are also mounted. From these, too, he invites inquiry and criticism; and from those agricultural in their pursuits a communication of their mode of farming, that results may be compared, and truth the better arrived at."

The Clippings, however, showed only one aspect of the social side of Holkham life. "Coke of Norfolk" had innumerable friends, among them being many of the most distinguished men of his time, and he loved to welcome them beneath his roof, where they had princely entertainment. Their Royal Highnesses the Dukes of Sussex, Clarence, and Gloucester were his frequent guests; George, Prince of Wales, afterwards George IV., rarely allowed a year to pass without visiting the friend whom he usually greeted as "my brother Whig": Fox and Sheridan, Burke and Windham, Lord Erskine and Dr. Parr were as much at home here as was Coke himself; and men prominent in every branch of art, science, and literature helped to form the brilliant assemblages for which Holkham became famous. For its shooting, both of game and wild-fowl, Holkham has long been renowned, and the entries in the game books are of considerable interest to sportsmen, not only on account of the remarkable "bags" recorded in them, but also because of the curious comments made on, and jests occasioned by exceptional feats of prowess. Perhaps the most interesting entry appears under date of November 20, 1829, and records the sculptor Chantrey's famous exploit. It runs:—

"Amidst the events of this day it is specially worthy of being recorded that Mr. Chantrey killed *at one shot two woodcocks*, and, considering this exploit as among the many illustrious achievements if not the most extraordinary of that great and extraordinary man, it was unanimously proposed to Mr. Coke, that the spot should be henceforth handed (down) to Posterity, and the honour of the Individual perpetuated by the name

of Chantrey Hill being given to it; assured that no Sculptor in Europe had ever done before so much in the art of shooting, (Mr. Chantrey) having but the day before killed at one shot a hare and a rabbit." Appended to this entry are the names of Thomas William Coke, Archdeacon Glover, and John Spencer Stanhope. Chantrey's fine bas-relief of the two birds is in the library, where it has beneath it a medallion of the sculptor.

Six times "Coke of Norfolk" was offered a peerage and he refused it, but on the seventh occasion he accepted it, and was the first commoner raised to that dignity by Queen Victoria. He took the title of Earl of Leicester *of Holkham* because another earldom of Leicester had been granted to the Townshends in 1784. He died in 1842, and was succeeded by his son Thomas William, second Earl of Leicester of Holkham, who was born here in 1822 and who died in 1909. It is a remarkable fact that the lives of "Coke of Norfolk" and the late venerable earl extended over a period of 155 years. The funeral of "Coke of Norfolk" was the occasion of an extraordinary manifestation of public grief and affection. He died at Longford, but his body was brought for interment to Tittleshall in Norfolk, the burial-place of Lord Chief Justice Coke. Through the kindness of Mrs. Charles Stirling, who in 1908 published an authoritative, exhaustive, and interesting biography of her famous ancestor, I am able to reprint her account of the remarkable scenes that were witnessed on the day of the funeral.

"On Monday, July 11th, the last stage was accomplished, and then occurred a scene perhaps

the most extraordinary which Norfolk had ever witnessed. Although every effort had been made to keep the funeral private in character, such numbers of people were determined to join it that this became impracticable. Soon after daybreak, from all parts of the country, riding, driving, and walking, people began to arrive, all anxious to pay this last tribute to the man to whom they owed so much. At eleven o'clock, when the procession started, it was in itself an extraordinary sight. First rode the steward, leading one hundred and fifty Holkham tenants on horseback. Then followed carriages containing the pall-bearers, clergy and others. These were followed, in their turn, by a solitary carriage in which sat the dead man's valet holding the coronet upon a velvet cushion. Then came the hearse, drawn by six horses, and bearing the coffin covered by a crimson pall; and then a long train of mourning coaches, each drawn by four horses, after which was led the dead man's own carriage and four, with closed shutters. Following this came several hundreds of private carriages bearing his personal friends; then two hundred gentlemen on horseback, riding two abreast; and, finally, a long train of miscellaneous vehicles belonging to neighbours, tenants and yeomen. The procession was two miles long when it started, but at every cross-road along the route numbers were waiting to join it. At Lexham alone one hundred and sixty gentlemen on horseback had assembled to follow it; while as it approached Tittleshall many belonging to the other side of the county, and who had been unable to travel further, came to swell the train, until it was impossible to compute its length, save that, when the hearse finally drew up at the

door of the church, the line of carriages alone reached to Litcham, two and a half miles off.

"But it was the numbers unable to join in the actual procession, but yet determined to see it pass, who presented the most remarkable spectacle. In the neighbourhood of Swaffham, it is said, fifteen thousand people were assembled. Many of these had arrived overnight and had taken their position during the late hours of Sunday. Along either side of the road which the funeral was to traverse were vehicles which had been brought there the day previously, and in which, after the horses had been removed, their owners had passed the night. The fields beyond were alive with people, many of whom had camped out on mattresses or cloaks amongst the hay. Farm carts and waggons were drawn up in every available space packed with occupants; even across the hedges cloths were flung in order that people might clamber up on to them. For miles the country was one moving mass of people, through whose midst the funeral at times wound its way with difficulty, and the grief on whose faces showed that they were not spectators merely, but mourners for the friend they had lost."

The monument to his memory, erected by public subscription, consists of a pedestal 44 feet square, bearing a fluted column 125 feet in height, and surmounted by a wheat-sheaf. On the corners of the pedestal are a life-sized Devon ox, Southdown sheep, a drill and a plough, under the last-named being inscribed the Holkham maxim "Live and Let Live." On three sides of the pedestal are bas-reliefs, representing (1) the Earl granting a lease to a tenant, (2) a Holkham sheep-shearing,

and (3) Irrigation. The fourth side has the inscription:—

This Column in memory of
Thomas William Coke, Earl of Leicester,
for more than Half a Century
the faithful Representative of this County
in the House of Commons,
Erected by Subscription,
Originating with the Yeomanry, and supported by the
Noblemen and Gentlemen of all Parties,
Records a life devoted to the welfare of his Friends,
Neighbours and Tenants.
Of such a Man
Contemporaries need no Memorial: his deeds
were before them; his praises in their Hearts;
But it imports Posterity to know that he pre-eminently
combined Public Services with Public Worth,
Affording an illustrious example of Birth and Station
actuated by Duty and inspired by Benevolence.
Integrity and Independence marked his Political Career;
Love, Honour and Right
attend the Father, Friend and Landlord.
The Arts lament in him a liberal and fostering Patron;
and Agriculture, to which
From early Manhood to the close of his Life he dedicated
Time, Energy, Science and Wealth,
Crowning his Cenotaph with her Emblems,
Cherishes the Precedent and commends the Practice
of her great Promoter and Benefactor.

This inscription was written by William Bodham Donne, the librarian of the London Library. In a letter to Bernard Barton, the Quaker poet, dated May, 1848, Donne says: "I have written a work which will last a century and *may* probably much longer. It is to be engraven on marble and imbedded in granite. A fig for such writers as you who use only ink and paper! It is an inscription for the late Lord Leicester's monument,

and it will brave the winds and the rain in Holkham Park." The Leicester Monument stands to the north of the Hall. On the south, surrounded by some fine evergreen oaks, is the Obelisk, the first work erected on the estate by the builder of Holkham and completed in 1729.

Holkham Park is nine miles in circuit and three miles across; it is surrounded by a wall that took nine years to build. The main entrance is from the south, through the Golden Gates and a triumphal arch designed by Lord Burlington, but there are seven different approaches, including Lady Anne's Drive, which runs northward towards the sea. On either side of the southern entrance are three almshouses with crow-stepped gables, built and endowed by the widow of the builder of the Hall. The park is level and has no very striking feature apart from its fine old trees, but a large number of deer are kept, and the lake is a sanctuary for all the wild-fowl of the neighbouring coast. Canada geese in considerable numbers keep the grass on the margin of the lake cropped short by feeding on it, ducks of various species abound here all through the year, flight after flight of widgeon may be seen passing to and fro between the lake and the sea during the winter months, while in stormy weather scoters, golden-eyes, tufted ducks and goosanders are driven inshore and are glad to find here a quiet resting-place. Coots and moorhens are also plentiful, and on the shore of the lake there is a large and old-established heronry, most of the nests being built on the top of some beautiful beeches.

The church stands in the park, a short distance to the left of the road to Hunstanton, upon a

mound which has been variously described as being of Danish, Saxon, Roman, and prehistoric origin. Although embodying some fourteenth-century work, the church was almost entirely rebuilt some forty years ago at the cost of the Countess and the late Earl of Leicester, some £7,000 out of a total of £11,000 being expended in carved woodwork. A splendid tomb with an exquisitely executed recumbent figure by the late Sir J. E. Boehm is that of Juliana, Countess of Leicester, who died in 1870. There is also a memorial slab to John Coke, the son of the Lord Chief Justice, and the first of the Cokes to own lands in Holkham; but to see the monuments to the Chief Justice, the builder of Holkham, and "Coke of Norfolk" a journey must be made to Tittleshall, a parish about six miles south-west of Fakenham.

Like his predecessor "Coke of Norfolk" and his earlier ancestors, the late Earl of Leicester reclaimed several hundred acres of meal marsh, and from the coast road one gets a view of a large tract of pasture-land, sheltered on its seaward side by a five-mile belt of Corsican and Austrian pines, planted along the seashore sand-dunes. Nearly opposite the park-way to the church a byroad leads down into this wide expanse of reclaimed land, and to another of the so-called Danish camps which are dotted about this part of Norfolk, the entrenchments here, situated near Rabbit Farm, being roughly circular in form, consisting of the usual rampart and ditch. A little way beyond this byway, the main road to Burnham Overy should be taken, the railway crossed, and the next turn to the left is the road leading to Burnham Thorpe, the birthplace of Lord Nelson. From the

comparatively high ground which the road ascends the church and pleasant village can be seen nestling in a little valley backed by a low wood-crowned hill, and it can soon be reached by another narrow byroad, where in summer the hedge-banks are bright with poppies, musk thistles, and tall velvet-leaved, yellow-blossomed mulleins.

On the outskirts of the village almost the first building one sees is the neat little Nelson Memorial Hall, the foundation-stone of which was laid on the 7th of September, 1891, by the Countess of Leicester. Built to serve as a reading and lecture-room, this hall is also a kind of museum, in which are preserved books and prints relating to Nelson, a curious wood-carving representing his death, and a portrait of him copied from Abbott's half-length picture in the Painted Hall at Greenwich. From the front of the Hall a raised footpath, bordered by hawthorns and chestnuts, leads across a meadow to the church, which has been partly restored by national subscription as a memorial to the Norfolk hero who so often worshipped within its walls.

To the hero-worshipper who enters the church—and what Englishman is not a hero-worshipper so far as the victor of Trafalgar is concerned?—perhaps the most interesting object it contains is the ancient font at which Nelson was baptized on the 15th of November, 1758, when he was about nine weeks old. Then there is the lectern, which was dedicated in 1881, and which was made out of oak from the *Victory;* while the fine pulpit, which is beautifully carved, was dedicated in 1905 "To the glory of God and in memory of his servant, Horatio Viscount Nelson, of the Nile and Burnham Thorpe." The father and mother of Lord



BURNHAM THORPE CHURCH.

[*To face p.* 278.

Nelson are buried in the chancel, the stone covering the grave of Mrs. Nelson bearing a Latin inscription, also, in English, the words—

> "Let these alone
> Let no man move these Bones."

On the north wall of the chancel a small marble monument, bearing the Nelson arms, is inscribed—

> "To the Memory of
> The Rev. Edmund Nelson, A.M.,
> Rector of this Parish forty-six years,
> Father of
> Horatio, First Viscount Nelson of the Nile
> Duke of Bronte,
> Who died April the 25th, 1802,
> Aged 76 years.
> This Monument, the Last Mark of Filial Duty and Affection,
> was erected by his surviving children."

Apart from these Nelson memorials, the church contains nothing of especial interest save a very fine brass, dated 1420, to Sir William Calthorpe. In the churchyard are the graves of Thomas Bolton, and his wife Susanna, Nelson's eldest sister; and near by is buried his brother Maurice. In the church register Nelson's signature appears twice as that of a witness to marriages which took place when he was about eleven years old, and there is also the following curious entry: "Please to observe that John Duffield and the other children of Robert Nelson and Catherine his wife, are no relations whatever of the Rev. Edmund Nelson, Rector of this Parish." The record of Nelson's birth and baptism is in the clear handwriting of his father. Beside it is a marginal note by the Rev. William, first Earl Nelson, setting forth the hero's honours.

The picturesque old rectory-house in which Nelson was born, and which stood at the opposite end of the village to the church, has long been pulled down, but the surroundings of the present house have not greatly altered since young "Horace"—as he seems to have been known at home and in the village—then a boy of seven, stole out of the house at midnight to search for a bird's nest and was found next morning fast asleep on a hedge-bank. This little adventure was quite in keeping with the story, told by Mrs. Gamlin,* of how "One Christmas Eve he laid a wager that, despite a snowstorm that was raging, he would go within a given time from the rectory to the churchyard and back again, bearing evidence of the accomplishment of his task by bringing a sprig from a low, bushy yew tree . . . that grew on the south side of the church near the tower. The churchyard was at some distance, and the surroundings were dreary and far from the road. As the time in which he ought to have returned was far exceeded his relatives grew anxious, and went in search of him. It was well that they did so, for he had sunk into deep snow, and had he not been rescued would have lost his life." A little stream—the merest trickle of a brook—bordered by pollard willows, runs through the village, and with it is associated the story of a parish "bounds-beating," when Nelson, then a captain in the Navy, was carried across it by a sturdy labourer. "I reckon I've done about the right thing," said the man, after depositing his burden on dry land. "No," said Nelson, "you should have dropped me, and then every one would have remembered the occurrence."

* "Nelson's Friendships," vol. i. p. 278.

The fine old barn that can be seen from the church path, the manor-house near the church, the forge and the ancient cottages built of flint and the local "clunch," or limestone, with their red-tiled roofs overgrown with moss are all a part of the Burnham Thorpe that Nelson knew, while in the Nelson Inn, standing near the village schoolroom, a room is pointed out in which Nelson gave a dinner to the villagers before he took command of the *Agamemnon* in January, 1793. In connection with that dinner Mr. F. J. Cross* tells the following story: "There lives to-day at North Creake, the next parish to Burnham Thorpe, Mrs. High, one of the few remaining persons connecting the present with the times of Nelson. She married the grandson of Nelson's nurse, and has often heard her father describe the sayings and doings of the Hero of Trafalgar. This man, old 'Valiant High,' gained the Admiral's favour on the occasion of the dinner which Nelson gave at the Nelson Inn to the villagers. The boy High thought he ought to have been invited to the feast, and was not slow to express his disappointment to his companions, who only laughed and jeered. This being insult added to injury, 'Valiant' went for the chief offender, a youth double his size and years, tooth and nail. The Admiral was a spectator of the plucky duel, and declared it was 'a right valiant fight,' whence the soubriquet 'Valiant,' which descended to the son, and of which the Highs were as proud as Nelson was of his patent of nobility. In his later days," says Mrs. High, "my father would delight to fight the battle over again, and was often talking of Nelson. One day High was invited by the then

*In "The Birthplace of Nelson," 1904.

rector of Thorpe to go over the Nelsonic ground, and view the scenes connected with the stories of the childhood. It was a red-letter day in the memory of the old man, and he talked of it to the last day of his life."

During the earlier years of his naval career, Nelson occasionally paid brief visits to his Norfolk home, and his chief amusement was to attend the Holkham coursing meetings. But his delicate health prevented his taking part in this sport so often as he would have liked to. "It was not my intention to have gone to the coursing meeting," he wrote to his brother, "for, to say the truth, I have rarely escaped a wet jacket and a violent cold." Mrs. Stirling tells us that partly because he shunned violent exercise, and partly because he had a most reprehensible habit of carrying his gun at full cock and of shooting at random, he was not asked to join the Holkham shooters, but on at least one occasion he paid a visit to Holkham. That was in June, 1783, when, on his return home after a two years' cruise, he presented himself before "Coke of Norfolk" to make his declaration for half-pay as a commander. On that occasion the fragile young man does not appear to have impressed Coke as being a particularly promising officer, but eighteen years later, when Sir Hyde Parker, with Nelson as second in command, was despatched to the Baltic, the squire of Holkham had every confidence in his Norfolk neighbour; for in the betting book at Brooks's Club, under date of April 30, 1801, there is an entry: "Mr. Coke bets Sir Thomas Miller 50 guineas that Nelson is neither taken prisoner or capitulated." By that time the chair in which Nelson had sat when

he came to Holkham in 1783 was looked upon by Coke as one of his most prized possessions, while the bedroom he had occupied was adorned with his portrait and known as "Nelson's Room." In after-years another famous admiral, who as a youth of seventeen was introduced by Coke to Nelson, and who first went to sea with the latter in 1783, was a frequent visitor to Holkham. This was Sir William Hoste, whom Lady Hamilton always spoke of as "dear little Captain Hoste," and of whom Nelson prophesied that he would be an honour to Norfolk and to England—a prophecy which the gallant sailor who made the famous signal, "Remember Nelson!" quite fulfilled.

This quiet village of Burnham Thorpe, shyly hiding itself in its little valley between the low hills, was beloved by Nelson, and wherever duty called him his thoughts often turned towards his Norfolk home. "Dear, dear Burnham Thorpe" he called it in a letter written a year before his death, when he felt that he would never see the village again; and on the 21st of October, 1805, the day of Trafalgar, he exclaimed: "It is a happy day for Burnham Thorpe, it is the day of their Fair!"

CHAPTER XV

BURNHAM THORPE TO HUNSTANTON

"And here and there, lock'd by the land,
Long inlets of smooth, glittering sea,
And many a stretch of watery sand."

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

"The deep foundations that we lay
Time ploughs them up, and not a trace remains.
We build with what we deem eternal rock—
A distant age asks where the fabric stood."

COWPER.

BURNHAM THORPE, as befits the birthplace of a sea-king, can hear, when it lays awake o' nights, the wild raging or ceaseless murmuring of the sea; but to reach the neighbourhood of the sea-shore again we must recross the railway and, at the crossways where we turned aside from the Burnham Overy road, take the byroad leading down to Overy Staithe. We soon come in sight of the richly coloured meal marshes again, which in some directions seem to be almost limitless, though seaward the sand-hills are clearly outlined against the sky, here and there rising high enough to look like little mountains uplifted against a far-off horizon. A bend in the road brings us to Overy Staithe, a bleak little place

on the landward border of the marshes, with two little inns, a big old buttressed malthouse, a quay with a wooden bench for old salts, some brightly painted boats belonging to the mussel-rakers, and, where it is not overpowered by the indescribable odour of shell-fish, a fragrance of sea southernwood suggestive of an old-fashioned country garden.

This Overy Staithe, up to which the little coasting craft creep by way of a winding marsh channel known as Burnham Harbour, is the port of the Seven Burnhams; and as almost every sign-post hereabouts points to one or another of these Burnhams it is as well to know something about them. Traditionally, there were at one time eleven of them, but four parishes, it is said, have been washed away by the sea. Burnham Thorpe, for some inexplicable reason, is never included among the Seven; Burnham Deepdale, according to the Rector of Burnham Market, has no title to a place among them; and by consulting old maps and records one may easily get into so bewildered a state as to believe that at one time there were "Burnhams, Burnhams everywhere," but that like the "ten little nigger boys" they are disappearing one after another, until the time will come when there will be none.

I am not daring enough to attempt to solve the mystery of the Seven Burnhams, although the Rev. T. F. Falkner is probably right in saying that they seem to have been seven parishes which once comprised the now decayed little town of Burnham Market; for Sir Thomas Browne, in his essay on "Urn Burial," speaks of Burnham as being a town containing seven

parishes. For my present purpose, it is enough to know that Burnham Market and Burnham Overy lie a short distance inland of the coast road and that we shall pass through Burnham Norton and Burnham Deepdale on our way to Brancaster.

Burnham Market is an old-world country town, with its market-place, its old-fashioned hostelry, the Hoste Arms, its Wild Horse Inn with a wonderful sign, and its church dominating the Green; but apart from the church it is practically destitute of archæological interest, and its associations are not particularly edifying. The church is remarkable for its sculptured tower battlement, dating from about 1430, and illustrating subjects from Holy Scripture and legend. Another church, which can be reached by the main street of the town, running from the railway station past the Nelson Inn, is that of Burnham Ulph or Wolf's Burnham. It is chiefly Perpendicular, but has earlier portions, including a Norman chancel arch and a semicircular window on the north side of the nave. At Burnham Sutton, or Southtown, just south of the railway, there are some ruins of a church of St. Ethelbert, of which Suckling Nelson, a brother of Lord Nelson, was rector. Burnham Sutton and Burnham Ulph are now really portions of Burnham Market, but Burnham Overy lies a short distance north-westward of the town, between it and Overy Staithe. The church here has Norman portions, and was originally cruciform, but its transepts have disappeared. Its chancel, which has on the south side three arches that once opened into an aisle or chapel, is—or was until recently—used as a schoolroom. This curious church has several interesting features, among them being a wall painting of

St. Christopher, just opposite the main entrance. In the centre of the village a sign-post is erected on the base of an ancient wayside cross. In the south-eastern corner of the parish is Peterstone House, occupying the site of a small Austin Priory. The site was at one time held by Chief Justice Coke, and it now belongs to his descendant the Earl of Leicester.

Although associated with the metropolis and two historic towns in an old rhyme that runs—

> "London, Bristol and Coventree,
> And the seven Burnhams by the sea,"

the Burnhams—which, let it be remembered, do *not* include Burnham Thorpe—have an uneventful history. Perhaps the most exciting times they have known were when the Norfolk farm-hands, resenting the use of machines on the farms, formed themselves into bands and marched through the country, burning ricks and farm-houses, and destroying all the machines they could lay hands on. "Coke of Norfolk," who used machines on his farms, was expecting a mob of rioters to visit Holkham, when news was brought to him that a large body of rioters was marching towards Burnham Market, attacking farmers and doing considerable damage on their farms. Although then in his seventy-seventh year, Coke mounted his horse—it was the last time he was ever on horseback—and set out for the town. As he drew near it, he saw ahead of him a gang of men armed with bludgeons and crowbars. Riding up to them, he drew rein and demanded to know how they dared disturb the country in so disgraceful a manner, and before they had time to collect

their wits he jumped off his horse, seized two of the ringleaders by the collar, and bundled them into his carriage, which was following behind him. Two other rioters were similarly served, and having got the four men safe in the carriage, Coke had them driven off to Walsingham Gaol. It is said that "no more machinery was destroyed on the Holkham estate, and the neighbourhood was thenceforth completely deserted by the insurgents." *

Overy Staithe is a hamlet of the parish of Burnham Overy, and as we journey westward from the staithe we still have some distance to go before we are clear of the Burnhams. There is a windmill by the wayside—one cannot help noticing a windmill nowadays, for windmills are becoming scarce in England — and then the road slopes gradually down to a stream called the River Burn, and crosses it in front of a fine old water-mill—a spot where the mill, the miller's house, and some cottages beside the mill-stream make a pretty picture. This is in Burnham Norton, or North Burnham, and when the village is entered it is found to be a wonderful place for old and crumbling walls, well covered with moss, lichen, and the small, wiry-stemmed plants of the wall-top flora, bordering roads, gardens, and even fields. Here the marshlands are greener than the meal marshes, having advanced a stage beyond them and become pasture-land; but the village, pleasant as it is, seems to have been dumped down in a desolate spot and to have lain there forgotten for centuries. Some of the old walls for which the place is remarkable form part of the ruins of a Carmelite friary founded in 1241 by Sir Ralph de

* "Coke of Norfolk and his Friends," ii. pp. 394, 395.

Hemenhale and Sir William de Calthorpe, and of which the most interesting remaining portion is the western gateway, with a chamber above it, restored by an Earl of Orford about seventy years ago. The presence of these ruins is sufficient, perhaps, to prove that Burnham Norton has not always been so deserted a place as it seems to-day; and that it was of some importance in monastic times is suggested by the Provincial Chapter of the White Friars having been held here in 1486. The church, which embodies work of every period from the Norman to the Perpendicular, has a lofty round tower, and although, on account of the church being large and the population of the parish small, the aisles have been screened off from the nave, the interior is by no means uninteresting. Especially noteworthy is its restored fifteenth-century pulpit, on the panels of which are painted figures of John and Katharine Goldalle, who gave it; also of SS. Ambrose, Gregory, Jerome, and Augustine. These figures have been restored, but the paintings of saints on the screen are much defaced, though an inscription to the effect that the screen was given by John Groom in 1458 is still legible. There is also a good Norman font. Several of the memorials in the south aisle are to ancestors of the famous Lord Chancellor Thurlow, including one to Frances Hibgame, a niece of a granddaughter of the Rev. Thomas Thurlow, of Wortham, in Suffolk. She died on the 19th of December, 1736, and was then, as the inscription tells us, exactly 10 years, 5 months, 2 weeks and 1 day old!

Just beyond this particular Burnham yet another is entered, Burnham Deepdale, the

prettiest of them all. Here for a while the outlook over wide expanses of marish moorlands and arid ridges of undulating dunes is exchanged for very different scenery, the village, with its ancient church, occupying a sheltered vale where "the orchard, the meadow, the deep-tangled wild-wood" might very well be far distant from bleak sea-beach and stormy sea. Yet Burnham Deepdale owes something to its nearness to the sea; for down to its beach the Deepdale "shore girls" go to collect cockles and winkles, while along the oozy borders of the salt creeks they gather the jointed glass-wort or "marsh samphire," which is used in pickles. In a recently issued report, the Inspector of the North Norfolk Fisheries states that during the half-year ending on September 30, 1908, there were sixty-six women and girls more or less constantly, and thirty occasionally employed in gathering shell-fish. Most of these "mermaids of the meals" live in either Stiffkey, Burnham Deepdale, or Brancaster.

Archæologists are well aware that North Norfolk is famous for its fine Norman fonts, and that the Deepdale font is, perhaps, the most noteworthy among them because it has on three sides of its massive bowl figure-sculpture representing the husbandry of the year according to the Anglo-Saxon calendar, while the fourth side is decorated with foliage in the Italian style. This font is remarkable for bearing no sign or symbol of a distinctly Christian character. The church itself has Norman portions, including a round tower, which has, however, a modern addition in the shape of an ugly lid-like roof.

Mr. J. Hooper tells us* that the existing tradi-

* In "Nelson's Homeland," p. 29.

tions about smuggling are vague, but in a parish map, dated 1780, a field is suggestively named "Thieves' Hole," while there are three fields marked "Robb's Occupation." In "Thieves' Hole" coins, a fourteenth-century brass signet ring, and other miscellaneous articles have been discovered, while in connection with "Robb's Occupation," on which there is still standing an old house (now converted into cottages) with a conveniently large cellar, Mr. Hooper quotes from the *Norfolk Chronicle* an extract from some old publication reading as follows: "We hear from Burnham Deepdale that one Robb, a noted smuggler, who has resided there some years, was this month apprehended by a strong party of men who came in post-chaises from Edinburgh, and after breaking open several doors was taken and directly carried away to Lynn. He was ironed and handcuffed. We do not know what his crime is, but the men declared there are several hundred pounds reward for taking him. He broke out of Edinburgh Castle in 1772. He lost a vessel lately near the Norfolk coast, which led to the discovery where he resided."

The main street of Deepdale runs into that of Brancaster Staithe, the headquarters of the North Norfolk mussel fishery, the staithe or quay being reached by a narrow byroad on the right near the western end of the street. No finer mussels than those which come from the Brancaster "scalps" are to be obtained anywhere along the English coasts, and this particular fishery is now the most important in the Eastern Sea Fisheries District, the oyster-bed, for which this part of the coast was formerly famous, being greatly depleted. Down on the staithe—a bleak spot

exposed to nearly every wind that blows—an ancient fish-like smell betrays the landing-place of the men who dredge and rake for mussels in the harbour, and during the latter part of the year, when the fishery is at its height, one can rarely visit the staithe without seeing some of the Brancaster boats come in, laden with the blue-shelled molluscs with which the local fisher-folk are particularly concerned. By the water-side there are several small boarded-in pools or cleansing pits, in which the mussels are kept alive until the time arrives for carting them to Burnham Market Station, and close beside these pools are the wooden frames of rudely fashioned wind-screens behind which the fishermen crouch in cold, windy weather while they sort the large mussels from the small ones and pack them in the canvas bags in which they are sent away. A little further back from the primitive quay are the curious ramshackle sheds in which whelks are boiled before being sent to market, and altogether this little marsh-side staithe is an unusually interesting spot. It goes without saying that artists have discovered it. "Artists!" exclaimed a sturdy mussel-raker when I was chatting with him one day in October, 1908,—"Artists! Why, last summer you could scarce walk about th' staithe without treading on 'em. They were here, there, and everywhere."

This fishing quarter of Brancaster straggles along the verge of the meals about a mile eastward of the village church. South of the main road, between the staithe and the village, Brancaster Hall, which was occasionally visited by Nelson and Lady Hamilton, stands on high ground amidst trees, while Rack Hills, on the north side



BRANCASTER STAITHE.

[*To face p.* 292.

of the road, is the site of the Roman station Branodunum, which guarded the entrance to Brancaster Harbour. Only slight traces of the great walled *castellum*, in the shape of scattered Roman bricks, potsherds, and a certain elevation of the ground, now remain, and there is nothing on its site to attract the attention of a traveller along the road; but until the latter part of the eighteenth century its foundations were in existence and proved it to have formed a square of 570 feet, with walls 11 feet in thickness. Its angles were rounded, and in one corner the foundations of a room or building measuring only 9 feet by 7 feet were uncovered when excavations were made in 1846. At the same time it was ascertained that a strongly grouted road, 11 feet wide, passed through the eastern gate of the camp: it was traced 120 yards across the square, in a westerly direction, and lay at a depth of from 2 feet to 4 feet below the present surface of the ground. At the south end of the camp also, within the enclosure, a grouted floor was uncovered, retaining flat tiles and large square stones. Numerous relics have been found at various times, including some exquisite styli, a bronze figure of Mercury, a silver ring, and a gold signet ring showing the heads of two soldiers and the inscription "Viva in Deo." A considerable number of coins have been picked up. In 1797 all that remained of the walls of the camp was pulled down—"barbarously removed," my friend Walcott rightly says—the material so obtained being used in the building of what was called the "Great Malt House," which was one of the "sights" of Norfolk and is said to have been the largest malthouse in England. It was 312 feet

long and 31 feet wide, and it was capable of wetting 420 quarters of barley in a week. This huge building has also disappeared; it was taken down in 1878; but fragments of the so-called "sugar-stones"—the local limestone—of which the camp was constructed can be seen embedded in the walls of cottages and farm buildings in the neighbourhood.

Branodunum was the northernmost of the line of Roman fortresses built to protect the coast against the raids of "Saxon" pirates. They were under the control of an officer called the Count of the Saxon Shore. According to the "Notitia Imperii," which is believed to record the stations of the Roman troops at about the end of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century, the camp was garrisoned by a force of Dalmatian cavalry. Messrs. Forbes and Burmester state* that of the *castella* of the Saxon Shore, Rutupiæ (Richborough), Dubris (Dover), and Regulbium (Reculver) "were permanently fortified at an early period in order to secure communication with the Continent; and two centuries later they are mentioned in the 'Notitia Imperii,' together with six other fortresses erected about this period, as forming the defences of the Saxon Shore. These additional fortresses, which were necessitated by the attacks of sea-rovers, were Branodunum (Brancaster), Garianonum (Burgh Castle), Othona (St. Peter's Head in Essex), Anderida (Pevensey), Portus Lemanis (Lympne), and Portus Adurni (Bramber Castle). The construction of some of these *castella* has been attributed to Carausius, the successful admiral and first independent ruler of a united Britain, while others

* "Our Roman Highways," pp. 157, 158.

may have been erected in the reign of Valentinian, A.D. 368, at which time the office of 'Count of the Saxon Shore' is first mentioned." A Roman road, which in later times was known as the Jews' Way, is said to have connected Branodunum with Caister near Yarmouth, but part of it has been washed away by the sea. Some authorities say, however, that the Jews' Way was not a coast road, but connected Branodunum with Venta Icenorum (Caistor-by-Norwich).

Although the traces of Roman Branodunum are of the slightest, modern Brancaster, with its seashore links of the West Norfolk Golf Club, its well-kept gardens, and its satisfactory, if limited accommodation for visitors and chance wayfarers, has much to recommend it, and it is likely always to have its share of the patronage of easygoing holiday-makers, who can enjoy and benefit by a few weeks at the seaside without having a pier to promenade on or a pierrot to entertain them. The footfarer who trudges along the coast road must not fail to drink his glass of ale in the old Ship Inn, if only because it was at the "Ship" that Nurse Blackett—Nelson's nurse—lived with her son, the landlord, after the death of her husband. "She lived long enough," writes Mr. J. Hooper,* "to see her young charge made Lord Nelson, and whenever he came home he made a point of seeing her. Her devotion to him was unbounded, as was pathetically evidenced just before her death. Her relations knew her to be very ill, and somewhat childish, but their astonishment knew no bounds when they found her fully dressed with a big bundle in her hand. Said she, in explana-

* "Nelson's Homeland," p. 50.

tion, 'His lordship has come home, and he sent for me to stay at the Rectory.' The faithful creature had stripped the sheets and blankets from her bed, and tied them together to form a sort of glory robe for the eventful visit her poor old brain had pictured. She was put to bed, never rose from it again, and died a few days afterwards." Yes, certainly, one must not pass through Brancaster without making a call at Brancaster "Ship."

The church here is scarcely so interesting as some we have seen since setting out from Burnham Thorpe, but it has a fine fifteenth-century tower and a good oak font cover. There are some almshouses and a well-built schoolroom in the village. How it became possessed of them is revealed in the following curious rhyming inscription on a brass in the nave of the church:—

"Here lyeth for all that please to see
Robert Smith, disposed to great Charity.
A free schoole he gave, and two Almshouses of fame,
Who intended to give Lands to maintaine the same;
But suddainly he dyed in the Towne of Brancaster,
Soe the Right of all was in Elizabeth his Sister;
Which Building for ever this godly Matron did ensure
With four score and twelve Acres of Land for that purpose to endure,
For the bringing up of youth, and releife of the Poore,
Let us praise their proceedings, God send the world more.
In June he dyed, that Month the thirteen,
And the thirty-eight year of Elizabeth our Queen.
Richard Stubbs, Richard Bunting, and John Read
To this end are enfeofed all in one deed.
The first of Worship, the other of Great Honesty,
As any could be found in all our Country."

Two brasses in the chancel are to rectors of Brancaster; the earlier, dated 1480, is to the

memory of W. Cotyng, whose name occurs in the "Paston Letters."

Very little interest attaches to Titchwell, a small village, where the church has a Norman tower and there is an old wayside cross standing beside the village street, but Thornham, the next coast village, is remarkable for having developed within itself an industry for which it has become widely and deservedly famous. It was Ruskin who, in the course of one of his lectures on the political economy of art, after indicating the kind of encouragement that should be given to young artists, added, "I have not spoken of the way in which you ought to look for those artificers in various manual trades, who, without possessing the order of genius which you would desire to devote to higher purposes, yet possess wit, and humour, and sense of colour, and fancy for form—all commercially valuable as quantities of intellect, and all more or less expressible in the lower arts of ironwork, pottery, decorative sculpture, and such like." The way in which Ruskin would have gone to work to discover these skilled artists *in embryo* is, however, pretty clearly indicated in his lectures, and at Thornham to-day one can see such artificers *in esse*, kings of their craft, doing work that delights the eye, satisfies both the man who works and the man who is worked for, and which is of a kind to last and testify to the fact that wonderful skill and artistry lie dormant where least looked for, waiting to be quickened into active life.

How it has come about that Thornham is widely renowned for its artistic ironwork is soon told, though it is not easy to realise how great and untiring must have been the efforts of those

who are responsible for the evolution of such remarkable skill and artistry among the homely folk of a village in no way more favourably situated than ten thousand others for the perfecting of excellent craftsmanship. Some two-and-twenty years ago—to be precise, in the winter of 1887—an evening class was started in the village schoolroom in connection with the Home Arts and Industries Association. The meetings were held two or three times a week, and many of the villagers became regular attendants, including the schoolmaster, the blacksmith, a bricklayer, a baker's boy, and a fisherman. Encouraged by the interest taken in the meetings, its organisers engaged from the Association a teacher to give, for a fortnight, on every week-day evening, special instruction in bent ironwork, and of that small beginning the famous Thornham Ironworks is the outcome.

To-day this firm of ironworkers—or, as it is content to describe itself, of "smiths"—goes by the name of Ames-Lyde, Elsum and Co., and here, although the fact is not self-evident, we have the secret of its success. For the "head" of the firm is Mrs. Ames-Lyde, the lady of the manor of Thornham, whose energy and artistic taste have directed the expansion of the local industry; while Mr. Elsum is the village schoolmaster, who from the first has been indefatigable in his efforts to revive in this Norfolk village that love of work for work's sake which was characteristic of the best craftsmen of the Middle Ages. Nurtured and guided by these two enthusiasts, who have proved themselves possessed of unusual artistic taste and exceptional enterprise and business capacity, the germ of the little village

class has evolved into a highly developed industry, productive of the best artistic ironwork. For a while the students—the blacksmith, the baker's boy, the fisherman, and the rest of them—were content with the comparatively simple and amateurish bent ironwork, but it was soon realised that no really good work of a lasting kind could be done without the aid of a forge. So a forge was started, and it was not long before such excellent forged work was produced that people who saw or heard of it began to send in unsolicited orders. But until 1894 no work was done in the daytime. In that year two men were given regular employment, and so rapidly did the business grow that in about five years five forges, with five smiths, two bench hands and four apprentices were required to keep pace with the increasing demand for Thornham ironwork. An office was also opened, in which designing was done, and since then an artist and a photographer have been added to the staff.

To visit the office and ironworks, personally conducted by Mr. Elsum, is to have revealed to one the wonders that can be accomplished by skilful smiths without the aid of machinery. Here are park gates, railings, lamps, well-heads and grilles of the most exquisite designs, ornamented with flower and foliage work so delicate and beautiful that Nature herself is rivalled in grace and perfection. And the chief marvel of it all is, that every dainty detail—every rose petal, lily pistil, vine tendril, and leaf-vein—has been done by hand, and can only be done by hand, no machine being capable of such work. In all parts of England, Scotland, and Ireland there

are now specimens of the perfect and harmonious compositions of the Thornham designers, while the workmen may well be proud of having reproduced some of the finest and most beautiful designs of Italian, German, and Spanish ornamental ironwork. In the office and designing room there is a fine collection of books and photographs descriptive and illustrative of the greatest accomplishments of the British and Continental schools of ironwork, and I venture to say that there is nothing among them which is beyond the skill of the Thornham men—men whose ability in the direction of ironworking went little further, a few years ago, than the making of a horseshoe, or the hinges of a field gate, and the welding of a tyre for a farm wagon. Since she has been satisfied as to the extent of her workmen's skill, Mrs. Ames-Lyde has paid visits to several Continental countries, where she has always been intent on securing designs and photographs, and at the time of my visit to the ironworks she was on her way to Japan, partly, if not mainly, with the view of adding to her unique collections of designs. Splendid work in the form of gates and lamps has been done by Messrs. Ames-Lyde, Elsum and Co., for the King (who, with other members of the royal family, has visited the works), the Prince of Wales, Lord Rothschild, Mr. Haldane, and many other notable patrons, and there is every prospect that the reputation won by the smiths of Thornham will be frequently enhanced by the achievement of fresh triumphs. It has well been said of the little workshop—an unimposing building with nothing striking about it externally save its open ironwork sign—that "there is an atmosphere of mediæval handicraft

about it all, recalling accounts of the Florentine days."

The lectern in Thornham Church is an example of the local ironworking, other noteworthy features of the church being some painted screen panels, a Jacobean pulpit and some old poppy-head bench-ends; but recent restoration has obliterated many marks of antiquity. At Holme, too, the next parish on our way to Hunstanton, the pulling-down, during the latter part of the eighteenth century, of the nave and aisles of the church, has not improved the proportions of a fine building which was originally erected by Henry Notyngham, a member of the council of the Duchy of Lancaster, in the reign of Henry IV. An inscription on a brass records that—

> "Henry Notyngham and hys wyffe lyue here
> Who maden this chirche stepull and quere
> Two vestments & bells they made also
> Crist Jesu saue therefore ym ffro wo
> And to bryng ther soules to bliss of hevyn
> Syth Pater and Ave with mylde steven."

There is also, in the chancel, a quaint alabaster memorial to Richard Stone and his wife Clemens, "who lived in wedlock joyfully together, and had seven sons and six daughters, and from them and theirs issued 72 children which Richard" (who died in 1607) "did behold."

Three byroads lead from the highway to Holme village, and the middle road, which can be traced down into the marshes, is a portion of that ancient and probably prehistoric road, Peddars' Way. Right across Norfolk, from Holme to the Blackwater ford on the Little Ouse, near Thetford, this oldest of Norfolk roads ran, and it can still be

traced, generally as a green trackway, nearly the whole of that distance, its antiquity being almost everywhere evidenced by the absence of towns and villages along its course. Only a few miles of this ancient Way have been macadamised and converted into modern highway, and the main road from Holme to Ringstead is a portion that has been so treated. That it was in use in Roman times there is little doubt, and in all probability it served some military purpose in connection with the great *castellum* at Brancaster; but the fact of its running direct to the coast several miles westward of the Roman station is against its having originated as a military road. It is only fair to state, however, that several authorities on the subject of Roman roads, and notably Mr. G. F. Beaumont, F.S.A., have claimed it to be of Roman construction. Mr. Beaumont writes,* "With regard to the Peddars' Way, it is undoubtedly an ancient road, and according to some antiquaries, was in existence prior to the Roman Conquest, and, although Dr. Jessopp † asks, 'How is it, if it be a Roman road, that all along those first 20 miles so very few coins or vestiges of anything that may be called Roman have ever been found?' the answer, I submit, is unwittingly supplied by Dr. Jessopp himself on the following page: 'This mysterious trackway ran its course from the coast to the Nar without crossing a single brook or tiny rivulet in all those 20 miles.' It would, I think, be difficult to point to any place of Roman occupation in a district which was wanting in a proper supply of water. Along that road in this

* "The East Anglian," (New Series), vol. v.

† "Random Roamings," p. 50.

nineteenth century there is but one small village, Fring, to furnish evidence in the remote future that it was in use by the English-speaking people for nigh fourteen hundred years. The direct course of this road, I think, bears evidence on the face of it, that it was of Roman construction. The British road, I submit, runs a few miles to the west . . . and is known as the Ailesway."

It is worth while to turn aside into Peddars' Way and follow it to Ringstead; for not only is it conducive to reflection to travel a road along which the Dalmatian cavalry from Branodunum probably travelled, but Ringstead is a charming village lying at the end of a delightful little chalk combe—the only one in East Anglia. While journeying along the mile or so of the Way which leads to the village, it is as well to remember also that the late Mr. E. M. Beloe, a well-known antiquary of King's Lynn, suggested that Holme was one of the landing-places of the Danes, and that they named Ringstead after the capital of their kingdom, where the Danish kings were buried. The presence of the Northmen is abundantly indicated by the place-names of this part of the county, and it is probable that the innumerable creeks and small natural harbours which existed on either side of the Holme promontory called Gore Point were easily navigable to the shallow-draughted vessels of the vikings, although from time immemorial they have been useless to larger ships. The Norfolk Ringstead formerly consisted of two parishes, each with its separate church, but the Church of St. Peter was pulled down in 1771 with the exception of its fine round tower. The existing church, St. Andrew's, is a restored Decorated building of no

particular interest save what attaches to a brass in the chancel floor. By way of the chalk combe, a beautiful secluded valley with its slopes covered with well-grown trees, a road can be reached which leads past the park gates of the old home of the le Stranges and then enters Hunstanton. The valley, as delightful a spot for a ramble in spring, summer, or autumn as can be found in North Norfolk, is about a mile in length, and just beyond its western end there are some fragments of another old church, that of Barrett Ringstead. Near by, in a farmyard at the end of the Downs, is a chalybeate spring.

The new town of Hunstanton, which must not be confused with the village of Old Hunstanton, situated about a mile northward, is unique among East Anglian watering-places in being built on the summit and southern slope of a chalk hill, which terminates abruptly westward in the precipitous face of Hunstanton cliff. Nowhere else along the seashore of Norfolk and Suffolk is there a chalk cliff, nor is there a popular seaside place facing the west. New it is—strikingly new—for it can hardly be said to have existed fifty years ago; but its breezy heights, on which the feathery tamarisk waves in the wind, have from time immemorial been known as St. Edmund's Cliff, and the antiquity of the legendary associations of the site atone in a measure for the obvious modernity of almost every building that stands upon it. If tradition speak truly, it was here that King Edmund of East Anglia landed after being nearly shipwrecked on the coast, and some fragments of masonry on the cliff near the lighthouse are those of St. Edmund's Chapel, which is said to have been founded by the martyr-



HUNSTANTON CLIFF.

[*To face p.* 304.

king as a thank-offering for his escape from drowning. According to one old chronicler, Edward was born at Nuremburg, and was the son of Alcmund and Siwara, King and Queen of Old Saxony. Offa, King of East Anglia, we are told, visited Nuremburg on his way to Jerusalem, and dying on his way back, left his crown to Edmund, who forthwith set sail for Eastern England. Here he reigned for an unknown number of years, but is supposed to have been a young man when he died, as Asser's remarks suggest, on the battlefield, or, as the generally accepted legend relates, was martyred by the Danes. Lord Francis Hervey, however, who has carefully investigated the hazy history of King Edmund, sums up the matter by stating what is *not* known about him, and leaves him a shadowy figure indeed. "We do not know," he says,* "the date or place of his birth; we do not know the names of his parents, or of his predecessors in the dependent kingdom or viceroyalty of East Anglia; we may say with certainty that Alcmund and Siwara were not his father and mother; that Nuremburg was not his birthplace; we may add with some confidence that his immediate predecessor was not Offa." It might safely be added that there is no reason for believing that he ever landed at Hunstanton, and that the fragments of the so-called chapel on the cliff might very well be those of an ancient beacon tower, erected for the guidance of ships passing in and out of the Wash.

Whatever may be its associations, the bold chalk cliff is the feature of Hunstanton, and it is a remarkable one in consequence of its con-

* "Suffolk in the XVIIth Century," p. 278.

sisting not merely of white chalk, but also of a richly coloured band of the so-called "Red Chalk" or "Red Rock,"* a ferruginous, hard, nodular stratum, which, combined with the white chalk, gives the cliff-face the appearance of a section of a wedding-cake. Beneath the Red Chalk is a deposit of Greensand, which is also exposed in several pits in the neighbourhood, and which, as a fine ferruginous conglomerate known as "carr-stone," is largely used in the building of the local houses. The lowest stratum in the cliff is a sandy breccia called "pudding-stone," boulders of which, with others of carr-stone, lie strewn about the beach, where leaping from one boulder to another provides plenty of exercise for those who go out pole-jumping, a pastime for which Hunstanton is renowned among its juvenile visitors.

Another interesting feature of the Hunstanton coast is described by the Rev. G. Munford: "A very striking instance of the destruction of land on the borders of the ocean, by the mighty agency of tides and currents, or by some other natural causes, may be seen off the coast of Hunstanton and Holme at low neaps. For there commences at Brancaster Bay, stretching by Holme and Hunstanton, across the Wash, and extending all along the coast of Lincolnshire, from Skegness

* "The oldest part of the chalk, the well-known Red Rock of Hunstanton, is a bed of limestone about 4 feet in thickness, stained by peroxide of iron. It has been regarded by some geologists as equivalent to the Gault, by others to the Upper Greensand; it represents an early stage of the subsidence by which the deep-sea conditions of the Chalk period were introduced over the East of England" (Mr. F. W. Harmer, F.G.S., in "Geology of Norfolk." Dent's "Norfolk," p. 218).

to Grimsby, a submarine forest, which, in ages far remote, abounded in trees and plants indigenous to the district. This now submerged tract was once inhabited by herds of deer and oxen, as is evident from the remains of their horns and bones which have been occasionally found there; the foot of man has also trodden these now hidden wastes, for works of art have been met with, buried with the forest beneath the waves. It is difficult to reach this overwhelmed forest from Hunstanton without the assistance of a boat; but in the autumn of 1831, accompanied by a friend, the writer managed to reach it on foot. About two miles north of the cliff, and a mile and a half from high-water mark, we arrived at the prostrate forest, consisting of numberless large timber trees, trunks and branches, many of them decomposed, and so soft that they might easily be penetrated by a spade. These vegetable remains are now occupied by an immense colony of living pholades and other molluscs, and lie in a black mass of vegetable matter, which seems to be composed of the smaller branches, leaves and plants of undergrowth, occupying altogether a space of about five or six hundred acres. Many of the trees, however, are quite sound, and still fit for domestic purposes; and, indeed, they are sometimes used by the proprietors of the neighbouring lands for posts and rails. But the most extraordinary thing we met with, in this expedition to the submarine forest, was a British flint celt or axe, embedded in the trunk of one of the decomposed trees, about an inch and a half, by its cutting edge. This curiosity is now deposited in the Norwich Museum."

With the exception of the ruin on the cliff and a portion of an ancient wayside cross which now stands on the Green, but which formerly stood in the old village, Hunstanton possesses nothing of archæological interest; but it has most of the attractions, amusements, and conveniences of a popular and growing watering-place. A healthier spot is not to be found on the coast; its air is dry and bracing, its water pure, and its beach the best of playgrounds for children, who never tire of finding treasures in the rock pools. The summit of its mile-long cliff—from which the tower of Boston Church, in Lincolnshire, can be seen across the Wash—is of all places in Norfolk the best for enjoying the stimulus of a battle with the winds. Here the rush of the wind seems to give you almost preternatural strength; it penetrates and pervades your whole being. Jonas Lie, in his "Visionary," describes how men who from childhood have lived an open-air life feel suffocated when confined within doors, and how they are forced to go out on to the cliffs to breathe the fresh sea breeze and watch the waves break upon the beach. A strong gale, he says, is "Nature's loud war-cry," and they cannot but answer to it, like an old horse to the trumpet-call. For such folk Hunstanton is a veritable home of Astræus, whose children, the winds, are always playing about his knee.

Every one who visits Hunstanton goes to see the lighthouse on the Point, and, having seen it, nearly every one turns inland to stroll through the village of Old Hunstanton, which, undisturbed and almost unaltered, has seen a new town arise just beyond its borders. East of the village stands the Hall,

the seat of the le Stranges, a beautiful old moated house, west of which extends a spacious park containing some fine old trees, also some high ground commanding fine views of sea and country. The gatehouse and a considerable portion of the Hall were built by Sir Roger le Strange, who died in 1507, and whose arms, quartered with those of Heydon, appear on the spandrils of the archway. Other portions are of later date, and some of the work is modern, rebuilding having been carried out to repair the damage done in 1853 by a disastrous fire, which destroyed nearly twenty rooms, including the ancient dining-hall, the ball-room and the state bedroom. The le Stranges are said to have held lands here since the Norman Conquest, and they claim descent from a Lord Strange who died in 1179. They have intermarried with some of the oldest and most notable families in Norfolk and Suffolk, including the Wodehouses, Astleys, Calthorpes, Cokes, and Norths; and several of them have taken prominent part in the affairs of their country. Perhaps the most celebrated member of the family was that Roger le Strange who was born here in 1616, and who was imprisoned during the Commonwealth for his share in an attempt to seize King's Lynn for the Royalists. He was condemned to death, but the sentence was commuted for one of imprisonment, and eventually he escaped to the Continent. After the Restoration he returned to England, and soon distinguished himself as an industrious pamphleteer and outspoken controversialist. In 1663 he started the first real newspaper, a weekly sheet called *The Public Intelligencer*, and so gained for himself the title of "the Father of the Newspaper Press." He was also the translator of several

works, among them being the "Colloquies" of Erasmus and Æsop's Fables, but Macaulay calls his style "a mean and flippant jargon," and Hallam regards him as "the pattern of bad writing." He was knighted in 1685, died in 1704, and was buried in London, in the church of St. Giles-in-the-Fields.

The curious old Household Accounts of the le Stranges were described by the late Daniel Gurney in "Archæologia," * and they have often been quoted, generally by naturalists, because of the interesting information they contain respecting the different kinds of birds taken by the fowlers of the Norfolk coast so long ago as the early part of the sixteenth century. Sir Hamon le Strange, the father of Sir Roger, was an intimate friend of Sir Thomas Browne, for whose "vast expanse" of knowledge he had the greatest admiration. He sent him various notes on his "Pseudoxia Epidemica," including one about a whale that "was cast up upon my shoare or sea liberty." The skull of the whale is still preserved in the court-yard of the Hall. In another note, he describes how, while at Hunstanton, "on a hot, bright, and cleare day" he leaned over his garden wall, and "looking steadfastly" into the moat, saw certain "small creatures . . . of forme of beetle or scarabee" rise to the surface of the water and fly away. From a book of MS. notes preserved in the muniment-room, it appears that the whale referred to by Sir Hamon was stranded at Holme on the 6th of December, 1626. We also learn that between 1604 and 1653 Sir Hamon took from Hunstanton Cliff eighty-seven peregrine falcons to train for hawking. Hunt, writing in 1815, states that "a nest of the Gentil Falcon has from time im-

* Vol. xxxv.



HUNSTANTON HALL.

[*To face p.* 310.

memorial been found on Hunstanton cliffs," while the Rev. G. Munford tells us that the peregrines were taken from the cliff and "trained to falconry by Mr. Downes,* of Gunton, in Suffolk, till at length, worn out by their constant persecution, they forsook the place in 1821." From the Household Accounts, we also learn that in the early part of the sixteenth century the crossbow was used for shooting cranes in this part of Norfolk, but by 1533 it had been superseded by the gun.

The church at Old Hunstanton, standing near the entrance to the park, was almost entirely rebuilt by the late Mr. le Strange, to whose memory the east window has been inserted. It contains many monuments to le Stranges, the finest being that of Sir Roger le Strange, the builder of the Hall. The marble gravestone of "Hamo Extraneus," who died in 1654, has the oft-quoted epitaph—

"In Heaven at home, O blessed change!
Who while I was on earth was strange."

The inscription on a gravestone in the churchyard reads as follows:—

"In Memory of
William Webb, late of the
15 Lt. D'ns, who was shot from his Horse by
a party of Smugglers on the 26 of Sepr 1784
Aged 26

I am not dead, but sleepeth here
And when the Trumpet Sound I will appear
Four balls thro' me Pearced there way
Hard it was I'd no time to pray.
This stone that here you Do see
My Comerades Erected for the sake of me."

* See p. 140.

CHAPTER XVI

HUNSTANTON TO SANDRINGHAM

"Beauty and grandeur were within; around,
Lawn, wood, and water; the delicious ground
Had parks where deer disport, had fields where game abound.
Fruits of all tastes in spacious gardens grew;
And flowers of every scent and every hue,
That native in more favour'd climes arise,
Are here protected from th' inclement skies."

CRABBE.

THE road from Hunstanton to King's Lynn runs directly southward, within a short distance of the shore of that great East Anglian estuary, the Wash. On its seaward side, especially as Lynn is approached, there is a good deal of land "in making"; for every tide leaves a thin stratum of sand and ooze on the shore flats, and from time to time artificial banks or sea-walls are extended seaward, to take in tracts of salt marsh which are ready to be reclaimed. In contrast to what has been experienced almost everywhere else along the Norfolk and Suffolk coast, sea encroachment, except in the form of an occasional inburst of water upon the low lands, is a phenomenon unknown here, and the once-thriving little seaport of Rising, which seems to have stood on the shore of a creek

or inlet of the Wash, is now, in consequence of the silting-up and reclaiming of the flats, some three miles from the seashore. The road journey from Hunstanton St. Edmunds to the confines of Lynn is one of about 17 miles—a distance to which a few miles must be added should the traveller turn aside at Dersingham and visit Sandringham. The village churches, with one or two exceptions, are unusually fine and interesting; at Rising there is a well-preserved keep of a Norman castle; and the scenery in the neighbourhood of the King's Norfolk home is quite equal to that of the Cromer district. A coast railway, with stations at Heacham, Snettisham, Dersingham, Wolferton and North Wootton, is a convenience to travellers who may tire of foot-faring, the stations being within a short distance of the main road.

One gets a good view of the sea from the high ground just beyond the border of Hunstanton. Then the road descends the northern slope of a chalk hill, crosses an old stone bridge, and skirts the grounds of Heacham Manor House, a picturesque Tudor building, the garden of which has some remains of a moat. Some curious mounds, in a meadow at the back of the house, have been variously described as being "Roman remains," the site of a small Cluniac priory, and "terraces for vines cultivated by the monks," but Mr. W. G. Clarke, who has made a careful inspection of the site, tells me that there are seven long parallel mounds, and that they appear to be Neolithic long barrows. "They are," he writes,* "in a big dyked enclosure, run east and west, and on the north is a broad dyked

* In a letter to the author.

and banked processional way. There were originally eight, but one was carted away about fifty years ago. Many Neolithic implements have been found on them, and I saw a fine 'button' scraper picked up. . . . If they are long barrows (as I strongly suspect), the whole area is one of the most striking prehistoric earthworks in Norfolk. I should say each barrow is about ten feet high, with steep well-defined slopes." Mr. Harry Lowerison, the headmaster of the Ruskin School-Home at Heacham, with the aid of some of his pupils, has been successful in discovering a large number of prehistoric flint implements and potsherds in his school grounds and the surrounding fields. These interesting relics, with others of later times, are preserved in the school museum.

The Manor House is little more than a stone's-throw from Heacham Hall, a substantially built red-brick house, portions of which are ancient and may date from the time when John Rolfe left Heacham for the newly established colony of Virginia and there married Pocahontas, the daughter of Powhatan, a Red Indian chief. The story of the "belle sauvage" who twice saved the life of Captain John Smith, and who captivated the young colonist from Norfolk, is a familiar one. There is no record of Pocahontas having visited Heacham during the few months that elapsed between her arrival in England and her death on board the ship in which she was to have returned to her native land. The Hall is not now occupied by the Rolfes, but that family has been closely identified with Heacham for at least four hundred years. A contemporary portrait of Pocahontas is in the possession of Mr. Fountaine Elwin, and formerly belonged to the

late Rev. Whitwell Elwin, of Booton, in Norfolk, a descendant of Peter Elwin, of Thurning, who married a granddaughter of the "belle sauvage."

At Heacham a fine church, dating from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, has been shockingly maltreated, but retains enough of its original work to prove how beautiful it was before the hand of the destroyer was laid heavily upon it. Approaching it by way of a path bordered by wall-like fences of yew, one sees that it was a cruciform building and that its transepts are gone, its chancel is shortened, and the roof of the nave has been lowered. Entering through a beautiful Early English doorway, one finds that the interior has also suffered sadly, one of its worst disfigurements being the ceiling above the nave, which cuts off most of the fine tracery of the Decorated west window. The main arcade consists of five rather plain arches, supported by circular and octagonal pillars, round the bases of which are some traces of stone seats. There are also stone seats along the walls of the aisles. A portion of the old screenwork is preserved, but nothing is left of the original chancel save a rather large priest's-door. The monuments are of very little interest, but there is a brass to a John Rolfe who died in 1594; another, at the west end, is that of a knight; a tomb in the north aisle is that of Robert Redmayne, who died in 1629; and a recently erected memorial is to Norman Macleod Ferrers, D.D., Master of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. Near the south entrance is a tablet to the memory of nine inhabitants of Heacham who were drowned whilst out on a boating trip one Sunday in June, 1799. It appears, from a

framed copy of the *London Chronicle* hanging near the door, that twelve persons in all were drowned and that they were on their way to the ship *Nile*, which was lying in Heacham roadstead. The tablet states that: "This monument was erected by their friends and neighbours not only as a testimony of regard and lively sorrow for their lamented end, but also as a memorial to warn the rising and future generations against rashly engaging in similar undertakings, lest they be brought to the same untimely end."

Heacham, like a score or more villages on the Norfolk coast, is becoming popular with visitors, for whose accommodation a good many new houses have been built. Close to its shore there are some sand-banks called the Stubborn Sands, but there is a channel leading up to a harbour which can be entered by small coasting craft and 'longshore boats. The history of the place, so far as it is known, is uneventful; but what it lacks in the way of interesting episodes has been abundantly supplied by Mr. Harry Lowerison in a volume of stories* illustrative of life in Heacham and its neighbourhood at different periods, beginning with the prehistoric and ending with the Victorian.

Near the Wheatsheaf Inn our road turns to the left, and we soon come in sight of a crow-stepped red-brick bridge spanning a tiny stream, and, near it, a picturesque water-mill, built in the Tudor style and fitted with a fine old door which came from Hunstanton Hall. Further along, on the right, the wooded uplands of Ken Hill are seen extending into the midst of the low lands bordering the sea, while on the left, about half

* "From Palæolith to Motor Car or Heacham Tales," 1906.

a mile from Snettisham, is one of the quarries from which the carr-stone is obtained, so largely used in the locality for building purposes. From the summit of the hill dipping down to Snettisham the outlook is pleasing, but the interest of the village is almost entirely centred on its magnificent church, the graceful stone spire of which —one of the five stone spires in Norfolk—is seen rising above the trees on the left. On drawing nearer, it is seen that this splendid church, which is almost entirely Decorated work, has a west front reproducing in miniature that of Peterborough Cathedral, and consisting of a beautiful central six-light window with elaborate and graceful tracery, flanked by towers with spirelets. The interior has been described as "cathedral-like in its proportions and architectural details," and it has been copied in the modern cathedral of Frederickton in Canada. Its plan is cruciform, but the chancel has been demolished and the north transept now extends only to the width of the aisle. The lofty arcade, the clerestory with its circular windows alternating with two-lights, the fifteenth-century nave roof, and the tracery of the aisle windows are all especially noteworthy, and there is a mediæval brass eagle lectern. Some panels of the rood screen have been preserved and repainted; they are now embodied in the pulpit. There are several memorials to the Styleman family, who resided at Snettisham Hall, and there is also a tablet to Thomas Daniell, Attorney-General of Dominica, who died in 1806; but the most interesting monument is a dilapidated alabaster altar-tomb with effigy of Sir Wymonde Carye (1612), who traced his descent from John of Gaunt. A

curiosity kept in the north transept is a flat-lipped bell, said to be eight hundred years old.

Mrs. Gerard Cresswell, who some years ago published anonymously a brightly written little book* about North Norfolk farm-work, gives a graphic description of the wild flats bordering the Wash, where "creeks ending in miniature harbours wind in and out of the marshes, and wherever there is a creek, there you will find a village." These villages, she adds, were "noted smuggling resorts, and you may still see lonesome public-houses and outlying farm premises suspiciously near the harbours, where the horses would be found in the early morning reeking from some midnight expedition and no questions asked; and there may be one or two prosperous farmers of whom you will hear that 'they made their money in them smuggling times' or 'they broke up a rare smuggling lot on his place once upon a time, but he'd taken good care of hisself afore it were found out!'" To these somewhat indefinite statements, Mr. Hooper† adds the definite information that "in February, 1822, a smuggling boat landed eighty tubs of gin and brandy at Snettisham, and when they were seized by the Preventive men, were rescued, as well as the boat, by the smugglers, heartily assisted by over one hundred persons armed with bludgeons and fowling-pieces. Over twenty horses were in readiness to trot off with the contraband. . . . The old Padders' Way. . . . made capital galloping for the smugglers, who were the chief users of it, and it is said that farmers and tradesmen found

* "Eighteen Years on Sandringham Estate."
† "Guide to Lynn," 1905.



SNETTISHAM CHURCH.

[*To face p.* 318.

extra horses for these night riders for a well understood 'consideration.' The men called at certain houses and asked if a 'basket of fish' was wanted, and in what plantation or hedge they should leave it!"

There are some pretty nooks and corners in Snettisham, one especially charming spot being a dam at the back of a small water-mill about a quarter of a mile from the station. The beach is quiet, and from it one gets a wide view of the sea and marshlands—facts which have commended it to the Queen, who has lately had a little carr-stone bungalow built there. Shipwrecks are of rare occurrence nowadays on this part of the coast; but such was not always the case. In the church register at Docking there is a memorandum, dated September 3, 1695, stating that "there happened a most violent storme at sea, during which about 200 sail of light colliers, bound from London and Yarmouth and other places to Newcastle, with more than 50 laden vessels, riding in the evening before near the shores of Brancaster, Burnham, Wells, Cromer and Blakeney, were driven from their anchors, forced on shore and abundance of them broken and wrecked, filling all the shores from Snettisham and Ingoldisthorpe to Wells and Cromer with abundance of vessels on ground, and many broken, and the loss of a many persons."* A marginal note adds that the wind was north-east.

It is only a few minutes' walk from Snettisham to Ingoldisthorpe, a straggling little village at the foot of the hill on which the parish church stands. Most of the guide-books say that the

*This was probably the storm described by Defoe (see p. 181), who thought that it occurred in 1692, but he was not sure of the date.

church is of little interest, but it contains a curiously ornamented though much-mutilated font and a good brass, while in the churchyard, just in front of the south porch, there is the stump of one of the wayside crosses that were so numerous in this part of Norfolk. The Hall, a modernised house which was formerly moated, stands near the church, and is usually associated with a grim story of which an old topographer has left us the following account: "In the ninth year of King John it appears that one of the family that bore the name of this village, being implicated in the murder of one Drugo Chamberlain, said to have been committed by Herbert de Pastele, the latter was sued by John Chamberlain, the brother of the deceased, when, by the King's license, the crime and the punishment were compromised in the following way: Herbert was to travel to Jerusalem, there to serve God for the soul of Drugo who was slain, during the space of seven years, including the time of his going and returning (if he returned to England before that time he was to be punished as a convict); and Thomas de Ingoldisthorpe, supposed to have been accessory, was to find a monk of Norwich or Binham, or a canon of Thetford, Cokesford, or Walsingham, to pray for the soul of Drugo, and to pay Drugo's parents the sum of twenty marks."

Ingoldisthorpe is on the verge of the Sandringham estate, a considerable portion of the adjoining parish of Dersingham belonging to the King. The main road skirts Dersingham village, which is chiefly built around a tract of low meadow-land; the church, too, stands low, but is backed by higher ground up which the road from the village street to Sandringham ascends

and, after passing through a well-grown plantation of larch, birch, and fir, branches off to the right and left along the border of the park and grounds. Like most of the villages closely adjoining or belonging to the King's fine estate, Dersingham shows obvious signs of having benefited by having a royal landlord: it is the home of many of the King's employees, its shops help to supply the needs of the royal household, and its well-built Foresters' Hall, the foundation-stone of which was laid by the Prince of Wales, stands on a site given by the King. A good deal of the parish is under cultivation, but Dersingham Heath, which is crossed by the main road to Lynn, is a beautiful expanse of undulating heathland sloping down to Dersingham Fen, on the border of the Wash. To horticulturists the village is known as the place where lilies of the valley and lilacs are grown by the acre, these two flowers being specialised by Mr. T. Jannoch, of Dersingham Hall, who was the first exhibitor of retarded lilies.

The church at Dersingham was originally a Decorated building, but considerable alterations were made in the fifteenth century, when tall two-light windows were replaced by three-lights. It has a fine and massive tower, and the fact of its being chiefly built of carr-stone proves that the "ginger-bread stone" of North Norfolk has been quarried for more than five hundred years. The first things to attract the eye of a visitor who enters the church are a beautiful tabernacle font cover, which has been carefully restored, and a splendid old carved oak chest, standing at the west end of the north aisle. On the front of the chest are carved the emblems of the Evangelists, whose names appear on labels, while the top and

lower rims are ornamented with a design consisting of birds and roses. Most of the screenwork here is modern, but the lower part of the chancel screen is old and has some paintings of male and female saints; some fragments of parclose screens are embodied in the pulpit and the choir stalls, and some old poppy-heads have been preserved. A curious iron-bound alms-box standing on a pedestal with four splayed feet is said to date from the thirteenth century. The only memorial of any interest is the altar-tomb of John Pell, a native of Dersingham, who was mayor of Lynn and died in 1607. A noteworthy feature of the exterior of the church is a beautiful gable cross at the east end of the nave.

In no part of Eastern England has so remarkable a change in the character of the scenery taken place in a comparatively short time as around Sandringham. Formerly this pleasant country, now so well wooded and cultivated, was a wilderness of undulating heathland, traversed, it is true, by two or three main roads, but chiefly by rough trackways, which, like its great ancient highway—Peddars' Way—had probably been in existence since the days when primitive man had pit-dwellings on the slopes of the chalk hills and heaped up barrows on the barren wastes. From the borders of the Wash at Wolferton and Dersingham south-westward to the neighbourhood of Swaffham—a distance, roughly speaking, of about 20 miles—there extended, not so very long ago, an almost uninterrupted expanse of heath and warren, monotonous and featureless perhaps, and deserving the name of the "wilds of Norfolk," bestowed upon it by Horace Walpole, yet not without a certain tawny beauty and wild

charm of its own, such as appeal to those for whom the untamed places of the earth have a curious fascination, and for whom the hedgeless heath road with its border of springy turf is the best road to travel. For many centuries this wild tract of country had undergone slight changes apart from those the seasons bring. It had seen the men of the Stone and Bronze Ages establish their rude settlements under the shelter of the hills, the Roman soldiery march to and from their camp at Brancaster, the lords of Rising and Castleacre fly their falcons at heron and kite, and the palmers who landed at Lynn trudge onward to the shrine at Walsingham; but the lapse of time and the passing of many generations of men had scarcely left a permanent mark on its surface. It was the home of the great bustard and the stone curlew, the stockdove and the sheldduck; rabbits swarmed in every warren; plover innumerable wailed over the lonely moorlands; at night the wild geese—winter visitors, from time immemorial, to North Norfolk—filled the air with their loud "honking" as they passed to and from the sands and mudbanks of the Wash. Even now, during the migration seasons, large flocks of ducks and wading birds pass along the coast, and at night their wild cries are heard in Dersingham Fen and the Wolferton marshes; what their numbers were in the old days, when the greater part of the fens was undrained, can be imagined. Here and there, at Narford, Southacre, and elsewhere, decoys were worked and large captures of duck were made; but the true wild-fowlers of the district were the men of the Wash, for whom the miles of mudflat, sand-bank, creek, and salting, were a fowler's paradise.

Of the old wilderness, that "tawny piece of antiquity" as ancient as the chalk ridge which crosses North Norfolk, the largest remaining tracts are Dersingham, Massingham, and Bircham Heaths and Harpley Common; the rest, save for a few small isolated tracts, have been brought under cultivation or converted into woodland and game covert. For a time this change in the general aspect of the country went on slowly and almost imperceptibly; but the advancement to power of Sir Robert Walpole, the famous Prime Minister, and his determination to make Houghton, his Norfolk seat, one of the most magnificent in the kingdom, led to a great alteration in his barren estate. Before 1717, it is said, the Houghton estate was so destitute of timber that for its only two forest trees the rooks were continually fighting; but between 1730 and 1756 377 acres of woodland were planted where there had been nothing but heathland. Later on the owners of Hillington and Rising had a share in this reclamation of the wastes, and since the Sandringham estate first came into the hands of the King (then Prince of Wales), changes so remarkable have been made upon it that no former owner could possibly recognise it. Overlooked from some such a vantage-point as the Water Tower Hill, the greater part of the country surrounding the King's home—a country where a century ago there was scarcely a tree growing outside the bounds of Sandringham Park—seems to be almost covered with well-grown plantations of larch and Austrian or Scotch fir, while nearly all of the lands beyond them, included in the King's estate, have been brought under cultivation, and that with marked success.

About 1770, when Arthur Young, the famous agriculturist, visited Sandringham, he wrote: "About Sandringham . . . are very considerable tracts of sandy land, which are applied at present only to the feeding of rabbits. It is a very barren soil, but not, I apprehend, incapable of cultivation; it lets from 1s. 6d. to 2s. 6d. an acre in warrens." To-day Mr. Rider Haggard tells us: "The Sandringham farm, that 'very barren soil' of which all that Arthur Young could find to say was that it was not 'incapable of cultivation,' is now a model which might be imitated with advantage to themselves and the country by all who are sufficiently persevering, wealthy and intelligent to do so." The stock kept on the King's farms —farms, let it be remembered, where a little more than a century ago there was scarcely a cow kept—includes a fine herd of pedigree shorthorns, some splendid Redpolls bred by the Prince of Wales, some of the finest Shire horses in the world, and some excellent flocks of Southdown sheep. Tree-planting has been done on a large scale, and in all undertakings and improvements the King himself has taken the greatest personal interest, while in the planning and beautifying of the Sandringham grounds and gardens the Queen's perfect taste is everywhere manifestly displayed. "If all the lands in England," writes Mr. Haggard, "were but half as well managed and cultivated; if their natural capacities, whether for the production of grain, grass, and timber, or for the rearing of various classes of stock, could be but half as thoroughly developed and utilised, then I am sure that we should hear but little more of that eternal and lugubrious topic—agricultural depression. Moreover, the

country would be a great deal more beautiful to look at, and for all classes, especially the poorest, more satisfactory to live in than it is."

Sandringham House, as every one knows, is the Norfolk, and I think I may say the favourite, home of the King and Queen. Naturally enough it is not open to the public; but during the absence of the Royal Family the grounds can be visited on one day in the week by any one who obtains an order from the estate agent. So it has happened that many thousands of people, from the richest to the poorest, have been privileged to enjoy the delights of the charming surroundings of the house and see for themselves the many interesting features of the place. They have read for themselves the inscription over the doorway of the house: "This house was built by Albert Edward and Alexandra his wife in the year of our Lord 1870;" they have sauntered along the broad walks bordered by trees planted by royal and other guests of the King, gazed into the face of the blandly smiling Chinese joss in his small Oriental pagoda, lingered around the old Italian well-head in the sunk garden and amid the fragrant blossoms of the Queen's rosary, watched the water-fowl stealing in and out among the reeds and rushes of the winding lake, lost themselves in the maze, and seen, wandering in the park, beyond the park lake with its islet, the herds of red and fallow deer. The wonderful kitchen-gardens with their beautiful flower-beds and trellises of cordon apple- and pear-trees, their splendid ranges of glass houses for carnations, Japanese dwarf trees, figs, melons, peaches, nectarines and grapes, requiring the attention of over a hundred gardeners; the

Queen's perfectly fitted-up dairy, with its charming little Dutch garden; the stables, where the finest of carriage and saddle horses are kept side by side with old "pensioners" whose years of faithful service are rewarded by the enjoyment of a peaceful old age; the harness-room, with its trophies of the King's race-horses; the kennels, where many famous prize-winning Bassets, Borzois, Great Danes, dachschunds and Clumber spaniels are kept, together with special pets and dogs of nearly every breed; the Queen's dove-house and the Prince of Wales's pigeons, all help to make the surroundings of the King's Norfolk home exceptionally interesting, and even when one has seen all of them the interest of Sandringham is far from being exhausted.

The park, which is about 300 acres in extent, contains some fine oaks which must be centuries old. They may have been standing in the chase or deer park which, in the days when the Norman castle at Rising was a royal seat, extended as far as Sandringham. The church, which is just within the park, has two principal approaches: a private one through the grounds and a public one from the Wolferton road. It is a small building, pleasantly situated amid trees and shrubberies. Originally an unimposing church, chiefly built in the Perpendicular style, it has been completely restored and greatly beautified by the King and Queen and other members of the Royal Family. When worshipping here, the King and Queen occupy a carved oak seat on the south side of the chancel, a similar seat on the north side being used by his Majesty's guests. On the walls of the chancel are carved marble medallions to the memory of

Princess Alice of Hesse, the Duke of Albany, the Emperor Frederick III. of Germany, the Duke of Clarence and Avondale, the Duke of Coburg, the Empress Frederick of Germany, and Queen Victoria; there are also memorial windows or brasses to the infant Prince Alexander, the King's friend Christopher Sykes, the Rev. W. L. Onslow, late rector of Sandringham, and Colonel Grey, who was one of His Majesty's equerries. The spot where the body of the Duke of Clarence rested before it was conveyed from Sandringham is marked by a cross in the centre of the chancel floor. The brass lectern was given by the Queen (then Princess of Wales) as a thank-offering for the recovery of the King from his serious illness in 1871. It is inscribed: "To the Glory of God. A Thank Offering for His Mercy, Dec. 4, 1871. Alexandra. 'When I was in trouble I called upon the Lord and He heard me.'" The pretty little rectory-house closely adjoins the churchyard, and just beyond it, beside the Wolferton road, is the Alexandra Technical School, founded by the Queen for the benefit of the employees on the estate and the inhabitants of the parishes included in it.

There can hardly be said to be a village of Sandringham, but the model village of West Newton adjoins the park on its western side. Its church, which is generally attended by the Prince and Princess of Wales when they are in residence at York Cottage, and by the King and Queen of Norway when they are occupying their Norfolk seat, Appleton Hall, was restored some years ago under the direction of Sir A. W. Blomfield, chiefly at the cost of the Royal Family and Household. The village is a charming one, with many picturesque cottages and delightful little gardens, while

its Village Club, occupying a spacious half-timbered club-house built by the King, is an institution of great benefit and convenience to the villagers. About a quarter of a mile east of the church the lofty tower of the Sandringham water-works is conspicuous and is visible from the Lincolnshire shore of the Wash. Appleton Hall is within a mile or so of West Newton, and stands on the site of a house built by Sir Edward Paston* during the latter part of the sixteenth century, and destroyed by fire in 1707. A large rambling house was then built amid the ruins, but this was pulled down a good many years ago, when it came into the possession of the King, and the present Hall was then erected. It has since been considerably enlarged and improved. The ruined church stands within the grounds, and near it is the Pilgrims' Well, which was used by pilgrims on their way to Walsingham.

A return journey from Sandringham to the coast road can be made by the Wolferton road, running past the church and Sir Dighton Probyn's house, or through Dersingham village. The former route is the pleasanter, the road being bordered, nearly all the way to Wolferton station, by well-grown plantations of larch, birch, and fir, rising out of a dense undergrowth of bracken. Between the border of the park and the station the only house standing by the roadside is the Folly, a pretty châlet-like structure, which was built in order that the members of the Royal Family might enjoy the fine view of the coast and the Wash to be had from a pine-clad hill-crest of the Sandringham Heights. By taking this road, however, the traveller toward Lynn misses a

* See p. 251.

delightful ramble across Dersingham Heath, unless he be content to turn northward for a while and so see the heath before going on to Lynn.

Dersingham Heath is one of the few remaining tracts of heathland in North Norfolk. The changes already referred to have completely altered the aspect of the countryside, and it follows that they have had some effect upon the local wild life. About seventy years ago the last of the Norfolk great bustards was killed at Lexham, and with it the native race of this fine bird became extinct. As late as 1832 a drove of seven birds frequented Massingham Heath and the neighbourhood of Hillington; but they appeared to be all females, for there was no increase in their number. A few years earlier there was a flock of eighteen or twenty, including four male birds, on the heaths around Westacre. In the same year that the last of the bustards was killed, another was sold in Cambridge, and was ascertained to have been killed on Dersingham Heath. This is said to have been one of the Massingham birds. Undoubtedly the gradual enclosing of the waste lands, together with the planting of belts of firs across the open heathlands, was chiefly responsible for the decrease of the bustard droves, and when once the bird became rare the gunners soon made an end of it; but it is doubtful whether this species was ever very numerous in this country, for it appears to have always been considered a table delicacy and a gift worthy of a distinguished guest. In the Lynn Corporation Accounts, so long ago as 1371, mention is made of bustards being among the gifts bestowed upon Admiral John Nevile; in the Hunstanton Hall Household Book this "dayntie



DERSINGHAM HEATH.

[*To face p.* 330.

dish," as Sir Thomas Browne calls it, occurs but rarely; and when Cardinal Wolsey visited North Norfolk, and was entertained by the Mayor of Lynn, a bustard was apparently not obtainable, though there seems to have been no difficulty in getting three bitterns and three spoonbills. The mention of spoonbills, under date of August 20, 1520, is significant; for they can hardly have been obtained at that time of the year unless they bred somewhere in the neighbourhood of Lynn. No doubt this was the case; for spoonbills nested in other parts of Norfolk until a century later.

Another bird which suffered in consequence of the great change is the stone curlew, or Norfolk plover, whose wild, loud whistle was a characteristic voice of the lonely heaths and barren chalk hills; but this bird, although it now has its chief British stronghold on the Norfolk and Suffolk heaths around Thetford, still survives as a breeding species in North Norfolk. It occurs, indeed, all along the great chalk ridge, but very sparingly, except within the borders of Breckland. Some of the gamekeepers affirm that this bird is a poacher and will carry off young pheasants and partridges; but this is not true of all stone curlews. Just as a squirrel will occasionally take to preying upon small birds and nestlings, so a stone curlew will at times acquire a taste for young birds; but such departures from normal habit must be of rare occurrence or we should hear more of them.

Owing to its skulking habits, the presence of the stone curlew on the heathlands would often pass unnoticed were it not for its clamorous cries. Even when disturbed its flight is generally so close to the ground as almost to escape observation, and

more often than not, when a human intruder appears in one of its haunts, it simply crouches amid the bents or bracken, or it runs swiftly to some hiding-place. Far more conspicuous, where it occurs commonly, is the handsome shelduck, which formerly nested in considerable numbers on the North Norfolk heaths, warrens, and sand-hills, and which of late years, thanks to the protection extended to it by the King and other landowners, has been able to re-establish itself in certain localities from which it was driven in the pre-protection days. This duck now nests on some of the sand-hills of the coast, but its best-known haunt is Dersingham Heath, where, notwithstanding that the Lynn and Hunstanton railway runs close to one side of its breeding-grounds and the main road runs parallel with it on the other, it seems so confident of its security as to be undisturbed by passing trains and road traffic. Although the male birds are brilliantly coloured, they appear, even at a short distance, to be pure white; and travellers on the railway, who often see some scores of shelducks dotted about the heath slopes near the rabbit-burrows in which they nest, might easily mistake them for domesticated birds. The near neighbourhood of the creeks and saltings of the Wash makes Dersingham Heath an ideal resort for this duck, though the wire netting which has been erected in places along the borders of the heath is said to prove an awkward obstacle to the nestlings when the old birds wish to take them down to the sea.

In addition to the protection extended by the King to certain wild birds breeding on his large estate, the establishment of the Wells and Wolferton Wild Birds Protection Societies has

contributed largely to the marked increase in the number of shelducks and other ducks breeding in North Norfolk. For several years there has been a gradual improvement in the local status of the mallard, teal, and shoveler, and two or three years ago a pair of gadwall nested for the first time within the area of the Wolferton Society. Sixty years ago the gadwall was becoming a rare bird in Norfolk; but about that time some birds taken in the Southacre decoy were pinioned and turned down on the lake at Narford, with the result that they soon became plentiful in that neighbourhood, and have now spread to other waters in various parts of the county. Probably the common curlew is also to be numbered among the birds breeding in or near the fen at Wolferton and Dersingham, where the first Norfolk nest was discovered about nineteen years ago; but rather curiously, the curlew, although often met with on the Norfolk coast, and especially on Breydon and the Wash, has hitherto shown a very slight disposition to breed in the county.

The creeks and saltings bordering the Wash are resorted to by large numbers of ducks and waders, but the extent of the great estuary prevents many of its rare birds being recorded, otherwise its list of them would undoubtedly be as long as that of the smaller Norfolk estuary, Breydon, where for many years it has been almost impossible for a strange bird to alight on a mud-flat without being recognised and, until lately, shot. Still, a goodly number of rarities have been encountered, among them being spoonbills, black-winged stilts, avocets, and several scarce sandpipers. The fact of the glossy ibis, another occasional visitor, being known to the local gunners as the "black curlew," is taken

as evidence of its having been a fairly common bird in the neighbourhood of the Wash. Pink-footed, brent, and other wild geese are regular winter visitors; in severe weather pochard, scaup, and scoter often abound; and "black duck" shooting provides excellent sport for hardy wild-fowlers.

Sport, indeed, there is in plenty along the lonesome shores of the Wash, but not for the few survivors of the old school of professional wildfowlers, of whom Norfolk could formerly boast a goodly fraternity—men who led a rough, adventurous life because they loved it, but who had to abandon it because they did not shoot for pleasure alone, but gained a more or less precarious livelihood by means of their nets and guns. Sturdy and somewhat lawless fellows some of them were—descendants of the old-time cargo-runners. Some of the older frequenters of Wolferton Creek have not forgotten Pooley, commonly known as the "harbour master," who was a typical example of the human amphibians who day and night were to be found afloat in their gun-punts on the creeks and drains amid the mud-flats of the Norfolk side of the estuary, and who was a familiar figure in Wolferton when the King (then Prince of Wales) came into possession of Sandringham. Like other professional punt-gunners, Pooley had a gun that needed to be thoroughly understood by its user, and although he was convinced that no better weapon of its kind existed, it one day behaved so badly as to bring him to an untimely end. To the last day of his life he never forgot to relate to new and old acquaintances how the Prince once stopped him and asked him if he had any ducks to sell.

CHAPTER XVII

SANDRINGHAM TO LYNN

"So long they traveiled . . . .
Till at last they to a castle came,
. . . adjoyning to the seas;
It was an auncient worke of antique fame
And wondrous strong by nature and by skilful frame."

SPENSER.

THE whole of the parish of Wolferton belongs to the King, who has built many cottages in the village and given the inhabitants a comfortable club-room. The Church Farm, near the station, is stocked with His Majesty's cattle, including some fine Shorthorns, West Highlanders, Jerseys, and handsome little Dexters, while down in the Wolferton marshes one may generally see some of the Shire horses for which the Sandringham estate is famous. As regards these Shires, a contributor to *Country Life* states that: "Locally it is believed that the storms and winds from the Wash put stamina into the horses. At all events, there is no stud in the country where the horses are treated by hardier methods. After a foal is born, it is kept for from nine to twelve months on the chalk, and then turned out in the marsh where it winters without any cover whatsoever.

Except the stallions, the horses are not brought under cover again. It may be doubted whether this is the best way to secure size and weight, but most undoubtedly there is no better way for getting good constitution, and that is the probable reason why horses do so well after leaving the stud."

The large church at Wolferton is especially notable for its splendid old screen-work, the rood screen being unusually fine, while a chapel at the east end of the south aisle has a beautiful parclose screen ornamented with many small and curious faces; another parclose screen, not so good, shuts off a chapel in the north aisle. Remains of wall paintings can still be seen over the chancel arch; also in the north aisle. A curious old alms-box and four stone coffins have been placed at the west end of the south aisle. The memorials are not particularly noteworthy, but a small one, dated 1730, to a child two years and eight months old, is inscribed—

> "This child had longer liv'd if from ye grave
> Beauty or Wit had any power to save."

This and other memorials are to members of the Kerrich family, which had a notable representative in Thomas Kerrich, F.S.A., who was born at Dersingham in 1748, while his father was vicar there and rector of Wolferton. Thomas Kerrich was afterwards chief librarian to the University of Cambridge. It was to his father, Samuel Kerrich, that the Rev. Dr. Edward Pyle, Chaplain in Ordinary to George II., wrote that remarkable series of letters which Mr. Albert Hartshorne gave to the world in his "Memoirs



BABINGLEY CHURCH.

[*To face p.* 336.

of a Royal Chaplain." For several years Pyle and Kerrich kept up an intimate correspondence with an engaging frankness. As a reviewer said, on the appearance of the book, "Both these gentlemen were easy livers of literary habitudes and an altogether cynical attitude towards orthodox teachings. They discourse, with the gay nonchalance of men of the world, of pretty rogues, or of port wine, or of books, but their serious confidences almost invariably touch upon chances of preferment, the toughness of some moribund pluralist, or the seemly longevity of some gouty dean or sinworn bishop."

A mile or so from Wolferton, the coast road enters Babingley, where the base of yet another wayside cross stands in the midst of the few houses comprising the village. Here are two churches—a small one of corrugated iron, built by the King, and a ruined one, occupying an isolated position on the verge of the marshland bordering the little Babingley river. The latter is dedicated to St. Felix of Burgundy, and is said to occupy the site of the first Christian church erected by that great missionary after he landed on the shore of East Anglia in 631. Sir Henry Spelman, the antiquary, whose Norfolk home was at Congham, not many miles from Babingley, seems to have been the first writer to record this tradition,* and he adds that the hills in the

* "Illic Babbingley, ubi S. Felix East-Anglorum Apostolus, circiter An. Dom. 630, à Dunmocco applicans, incolas imbuit Christianâ Fide. primamque hujus tractus Ecclesiam condidit, quae à posteris ejus dicata patrocinio hodie S. Felicis appellatur. Rei memoriam etiam praedicant adjacentes montes *Christianorum* dicti, the Christian hills; et in vicinia Flitcham, quasi Felixham, *i.e.* Felicis Villa seu Habitatio" (Spelman's "Icenia"),

neighbourhood of the church were called, in his day, the Christian Hills. His statements were repeated by Camden, and Peter le Neve, who died in 1729, in one of his manuscript collections, has the note: "Babingley. This was the first church built in these parts by Felix the Burgundian, as saith the manuscript belonging to the family of Shernburn." It is supposed that Felix landed on or near the spot where the church stands; for in Saxon times, and probably until much later, an arm of the sea covered the marshland of the Babingley valley. There is no trace of Saxon work in the ruined church, which is mainly in the Decorated style, but has Norman portions. A picturesque restored moated manor-house stands at the end of the byroad leading to the church; a little distance along the main road, on the left, is the old Hall, which the Queen converted into a convalescent home for officers invalided home from South Africa during the war. It was afterwards fitted up as a hospital for the Sandringham estate.

Having crossed the Babingley river, which now represents the wider creek or channel which was the highway of the trade of Rising in the days when that charming village was a seaside town and a borough returning two members to Parliament — the southward-bound traveller sets very few steps before he sees a quaint old building by the roadside, just opposite Rising Church. This is the Trinity Hospital, commonly known as the Bede House, built and endowed in 1614 by Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton, for the accommodation of twelve poor spinsters of Rising, North Wootton, and Roydon. It consists of a main building, containing a dining-hall, a

small chapel, and the apartments of the governess or matron, an arched passage leading through it into a quiet courtyard on each side of which are the rooms occupied by the inmates. Some remarkable regulations as to admission into this almshouse were drawn up by its founder, who stipulated that every one who enjoyed the benefits of it should be of "honest life and conversation, religious, grave, and discreet . . . no common beggar, harlot, scold, drunkard, haunter of taverns, inns, or alehouses," and should she be found guilty of "atheism, heresy, blasphemy," or insubordination, she should be expelled. These rules have been modified to some extent of late years, and poor widows as well as spinsters are received into the Bede House; but every inmate wears on Sundays and certain festival days a picturesque Jacobean dress, consisting of a bright red cloak with the Howard badge on the left breast, steeple-crowned beaver hats, a blue livery gown, and a brown linsey frock. A quainter spectacle can hardly be imagined than that of the little procession of dames which makes its way across the road to the church on Sundays, when the governess is distinguished from the bedes-women by a remarkable headgear which a venturesome male topographer has described as being "festooned around its very ample margins with bugle-bead trimming, crowned by a turret machicolated with lace." Originally the duties of the governess were strictly defined. She had to read prayers every morning and afternoon, attend church regularly, never leave the Bede House without permission, take care of the inmates' hats, cloaks and gowns, cultivate the garden, never permit any stranger to sleep in the

house, and look to all repairs, so "that not so much as one stone be missing either in the walls or upon the hospital by the space of a month." At the present time this curious institution provides comfortable quarters for its inmates, one of whom is usually ready to conduct any visitor over it, and point out to him its interesting features. The dining-hall contains its original furniture, including a carved wardrobe in which the picturesque dresses are kept. The chapel has some poppy-head benches; the arms of the founder in stained glass can be seen in one of the windows. The small gratuities of visitors to this comfortable home of quaint survivals are spent in maintaining a donkey and car for the use of its infirm inmates.

Rising Bede House is practically unaltered since it was built. The restoration it has undergone has been effected in such a way as to be unnoticeable, and there is no unsightly modern addition to spoil the harmony of its design. Would that the same could be said of the church! One of the most beautiful examples of late Norman work in the county, it has been almost entirely spoilt by tasteless restoration and ill-conceived reconstruction. As a whole, it now resembles no other church, and has an upper storey to its tower which is as ugly as can well be imagined; only where the restorers could find no possible excuse for maltreating the building does it retain something of its original beauty of design. The walls, with the exception of a modern south transept, date from about the middle of the twelfth century, and the finest work is external, at the west end, where a round-headed doorway with massive zigzag mouldings



RISING BEDE HOUSE.

[*To face p.* 340.

has above it a rich and beautiful Norman window and some fine arcading. Within, a Norman arch, supported by massive square piers, opens into the central tower, one storey of which opens lantern-wise into the church and has a groined vaulting. The chancel windows are restored Early English, and an arch of that period opens into the modern transept. The font is a fine example of Norman work, its square bowl being ornamented with some remarkable grotesques.

A well-preserved specimen of an ancient wayside cross stands on the village green, adjoining the churchyard, which is about two minutes' walk from the castle, the massive Norman keep of which is the finest in East Anglia. It is built amid extensive and strong entrenchments, fairly typical of those of the average so-called "mote-castle." The central work, on which the keep stands, represents the usual mound, the courtyard being about 26 feet above the bottom of the fosse, from which the surrounding rampart rises to a height of about 43 feet. The Rev. E. A. Downman, whose plan of the earthworks is preserved in the Free Library at Norwich, states that on the east an outer enclosure forms an entrance 15 to 19 feet above the ditch, the rampart rising from 28 to 30 feet. On the west is another enclosure, smaller than that on the east, and not directly connected with the central work. Mr. Downman believes that there was formerly a stone wall all round the central rampart, and it is elsewhere stated that such a wall existed, having three towers, which the possessors of the manors of Hunstanton, Roydon, and the Woottons were bound by their tenures to defend. Mr.

J. C. Wall,* in dealing with earthworks of the type represented here, states that "this class of stronghold is found in Norway and Sweden, Denmark and Normandy, as fully as in England. Advocates for a Norman origin are emphatic in their statements, but the greater number of such forts as abound in Normandy can be traced to a more northern immigrating family; and although most of this type in England may first be recognisably noticed when in the hands of Norman nobles, there is every probability that England received her tuition in the construction of such mounds from the same Norse tribes as themselves. Many reasons lead to the conclusion that mount fortresses were common in England before William's invasion, and that they were seized and adapted and multiplied by the conquerors."

The keep is approached by way of a bridge over the fosse, the road passing through the ruins of the gate-house. It is a massive square tower, with an arched entrance on the east side, within which a flight of steps leads up to a square room in the north-east angle of the building. This room, the vestibule of the great hall, is Norman with the exception of its roof, and contains a few curiosities. A fireplace, with some interesting tiling, fills the Norman doorway that led into the great hall; but from the north-west corner of the room a staircase leads up to the roof of the keep, which commands a grand view of the Sandringham woodlands, the Rising and Babingley marshlands, and the Wash. Hardly a trace of the great hall remains, its floor and ceiling having fallen or been pulled down; but a gallery

* "Ancient Earthworks," p. 68.

runs part of the way round the interior of the tower. Adjoining this gallery is a small room called the chapel, on the north side of which is another room, by way of which the sally-port was reached, this being now represented by a narrow passage through the wall of the keep. Until a few years ago the basement was filled with the *débris* of the vanished rooms; but the rubbish has been cleared away, revealing the bases of some columns and the well that is always found in a Norman keep.

An interesting feature of the castle has lately been described by Mr. G. Bailey.* This is a well-carved oak door, now filling a Norman doorway, but which was originally made for a small four-centred Tudor arch. It has six panels with carved acanthus-leaf ornaments, together with lilies of the valley, poppies, seeds, buds, and vases. In the centre of each panel is a medallion, containing the head of a person who, in Mr. Bailey's opinion, is represented taking part in the performance of a dance or a play. "As persons know who have made even a cursory study of fifteenth-century carvings, the introduction of heads in medallion was," he writes, "a usual feature, as well as busts in square or oblong panels. There are well-known examples in the dining-room at Haddon Hall. They are also to be found on the panels of window-shutters and chair-backs, as well as on carved oak side-boards and cabinets; but we think this old door is an exception in its representation of actors in the vigorous exercise of their art. These have no element of the grotesque about them, as is the case in many of the others."

* "The Antiquary," vol. iv. (New Series), p. 423.

Rising Castle is believed to have been built about 1176 by William d'Albini, first Earl of Arundel, upon whose father the manors of Rising were conferred by William Rufus. A remarkable exploit of William d'Albini is described at length by some of the old chroniclers. The story runs that the Queen of France, a beautiful widow, fell in love with a handsome and valiant knight, and caused a tournament to be proclaimed, so that her lover might distinguish himself in it in such a way that she might marry him without dishonour. Among the knights who took part in the tournament was William d'Albini. He vanquished every antagonist who met him, and made so brave a figure that the fickle queen transferred her affections to him, invited him to a costly banquet, and offered him marriage. D'Albini, however, had previously been the recipient of royal favours, and had plighted his troth to Queen Adeliza, the widow of Henry I. of England. On hearing of this, the Queen of France "grew so discontented" as to determine to take d'Albini's life, and having enticed him into a cave in which a fierce lion was kept, she closed the door upon him and left him to his fate. "Being therefore in this danger," writes Dugdale, "he rolled his mantle about his arm and, putting his hand into the mouth of the beast, pulled out his tongue by the root, which done he followed the Queen to her palace, and gave it to one of her maids to present to her." By this exploit he gained for himself the name of "William of the Strong Hand," "nor was it long after that the Queen of England accepted him for her husband."

The male line of the d'Albinis became extinct in the thirteenth century, and the castle subsequently came into the possession of Robert de Montalt. He is said to have been "a man of note as a warrior and statesman," and while he held Rising he had a lawsuit with the authorities of Lynn, arising out of his claim to the tolbooth and tolls. Feeling seems to have run high, and on one occasion a party of Lynn men besieged Rising Castle, broke down its doors, imprisoned De Montalt and his men, and carried away arms, jewels, and money to the value of £40, afterwards compelling De Montalt, in the presence of a crowd of people assembled in the marketplace at Lynn, to abandon his claim. When the lawsuit was decided, however, judgment was given in his favour, and he was awarded £4,000 damages.

In 1331 Edward III. purchased the castle and bestowed it upon his mother, Queen Isabella, that "she-wolf of France," who is credited with having brought about the death of her husband, Edward II., by subjecting him to unmentionable tortures. Hume, who writes of her as being confined to her own house "at Risings near London," says that her income was reduced to £4,000 a year, and "though the king (Edward III.), during the remainder of her life, paid her a decent visit once or twice a year, she never was able to reinstate herself in any credit or authority." In the Lynn Chamberlains' Accounts * for the period during which she was at Rising, we find several entries to prove that the Corporation contributed

* "Manuscripts of the Corporations of Southampton and King's Lynn." Historical Manuscripts Commission Report XI. Appendix III., pp. 213, 214.

to her entertainment and well-being, among them being the following:—

"5–6 Edward III.	xx*s.* given for bread sent to Isabella the old Queen, when she came from Walsingham.
	iii*li.* iii*s.* iii*d.* given for a case of wine sent to the same queen.
	xl*s.* given for oats sent to the same queen.
7–9 Edward III.	xxv*d.* given for carrying tribute to the Queen at Rising.
	lviii*s.* given for flesh-meats sent to Queen Isabel.
	xx*s.* for lampreys sent to the same Queen.
	viii*s.* x*d.* given for wine sent to the same Queen.
12–13 Edward III.	xl*s.* given for a falcons, given to Sir Walter de Cheshunte, the Queen Isabell's steward.
17–18 Edward III.	ix*li.* xviii*s.* x*d.* paid for flesh-meats sent to the Lady Isabel the Queen.
25–26 Edward III.	ix*li.* xii*s.* ix*d.* paid for a pipe of wine and a barrel of Stourgon, sent to Lady Isabel Queen of England, and for money given to John le Butelier and for the carriage of same offerings to Rysingge.
30–31 Edward III.	v*li.* x*s.* paid for two barrels of stourgoun sent to the Lady Isabel, Queen of England.
	vi*li.* paid for herrings sent to the same Queen."

Much additional expenditure was entailed by the King's visits to Rising, the gifts from the Commonalty of Lynn including £3 16s. 1d. in "offerings sent to the servants . . . at the first coming of the Lord King to Rysyng"; 4s. 8d. given to the King's door-keeper; 3s. 7d. for the charges of the King's palfrey; and 3s. for gloves for the King's falconer. The cost to Lynn of one royal visit to Rising was £528 18s. 4d., which sum included numerous gifts

to minstrels and messengers of the King, and offerings to divers persons, among them being the Earl of Lancaster, the Bishop of Durham, and the Queen's maid.

There is a local tradition that Queen Isabella died in the castle, and was buried in Rising Church, where, it is said, a stone bearing the words "Isabella Regina" was pointed out as marking her grave; but it is well known that she died in another of her castles, at Hertford, on the 23rd of August, 1358, and was buried in the choir of Greyfriars Church within Newgate. Agnes Strickland * states that "She choose the Church of the Grey Friars, where the mangled remains of her paramour, Mortimer, had been buried eight-and-twenty years previously, for the place of her interment; and carrying her characteristic hypocrisy even to the grave, she was buried with the heart of her murdered husband on her breast."

The subsequent history of Rising Castle is without any event of outstanding interest. The castle was held for a while by the Black Prince and by Richard II., who exchanged it with John le Vaillant, Duke of Brittany, for the Castle of Brest. The Duke visited Rising on more than one occasion, and among the Corporation MSS. preserved at Lynn are two documents signed by his auditor, John Merston, acknowledging the receipt of 20 marks, the Duke's share of the issue of the farm of a portion of the Lynn Tolbooth. In 1397 the castle again became the property of the Crown, but in the reign of Henry VIII. it was granted to Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk. Some time before this, it had begun to fall into decay; for in the

* "Lives of the Queens of England."

reign of Edward IV., it was said of it that "there was never a house in the Castle able to keep out the rain-water, wind, and snow." On the execution of Howard, it was granted to Edward, Earl of Oxford, and afterwards to Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton, and it has since been held by members of different branches of the Howard family.

There is an old rhyme which runs:—

"Rising was a sea-port town
When Lynn was but a marsh;
Now Lynn it is a sea-port,
And Rising fares the worse."

It appears that the town was incorporated in the earlier half of the thirteenth century, when Hugh d'Albini obtained a charter granting it a Mayor and "other privileges." Its trade is vaguely stated to have been "considerable," and to have decayed in consequence of the harbour becoming blocked with sand; but it is interesting to know that at one time this pretty little village could boast of having not only a Mayor, but also a Recorder, a High Steward, twelve Aldermen, a Speaker of the Commons, and fifty burgesses. The bounds of Rising Chase, the royal deer park, are clearly defined in a survey dated August 1st, 31 Elizabeth, preserved in the Record Office—a document chiefly of interest now on account of its mention of a "Rising Haven at the Sea at a place where the Steeple of St. Margaret's in King's Lynne and the Steple of St. Nicholas in the same towne towards the south doe fall in one right lyne." In 1557 the town became a Parliamentary borough, and it returned two members to Parliament until the passing of the

Reform Bill of 1832. Among its representatives was Sir Robert Paston, who, in 1664, proposed to the House of Commons the "unprecedented grant" of £2,500,000 to the King to wage war against the Dutch. Samuel Pepys, the diarist, and Horace Walpole, also, for a time, represented Rising.

In 1819 it was said of Rising, "At present the Corporation consists of only two Aldermen, who alternately serve the office of Mayor, and he is the returning officer of two members to the British senate. It has been observed that though at an election five or six names appear on the poll-book, yet it is questionable whether, except the Rector of the parish, there be a single legal voter!" A story of the choosing of a Mayor is retold by Mr. W. Rye:* "The voters went into a barn, where each candidate had a bundle of hay laid for him on a cushion . . . a calf was then turned in, and he whose hay was eaten became the mayor. A Rising man being chaffed as to this, retorted that the difference between his election and that in Lynn, was that at Rising they choose with one calf, and at Lynn with eighteen!" From 1762 to 1783 John Wakefield and Nathaniel Kirby alternately filled the office of Mayor, and after the death of Kirby, Wakefield was Mayor until 1796. Of him some amusing stories are told. His business was that of a thatcher, and on one occasion, when a messenger from London, bearing important despatches, arrived in the village, he was informed that his worship was engaged in the exercise of his "high calling." He was at work, in fact, on the roof of a barn. On being hailed by the messenger, the waggish Wakefield

* "Norfolk Songs, Stories, and Sayings," p. 115.

replied, "If it is John Wakefield the thatcher you want to see, I'll come down at once; but if it is the Mayor of Castle Rising you have business with, you must come up here to me!" On another occasion, while he was carting hay to Lynn, a truss fell from the load, and he called to a passer-by to help him to replace it. The man addressed stiffly asked him if he knew that he was speaking to the Mayor of Lynn. "Man," replied Wakefield, "that don't make no odds; I'm the Mayor of Castle Rising! Now will you give me a hand?" The grave of this rustic wit is in Rising churchyard.

Mr. Rye tells us that the burgesses of Rising were reduced by the proprietors of the land, the Earl of Orford and the Countess of Suffolk, from fifty to two, so that each burgess had a representative in Parliament. The election was then carried on in the church porch. On one occasion a waiter was sent to Parliament.

In 1833, when a municipal commissioner came to inquire into the constitution of the Rising Corporation, he could find no charter nor document of any kind relating to it, but he learnt that it then consisted of a Recorder, a Mayor, one Alderman, and a Sergeant-at-mace. The value of the Corporation property averaged £20 per annum from land, which sum was used to defray the cost of two dinners a year given by the Mayor to the Leet. Since then there has been no Corporation, and probably the only relics of it are two logs of wood with chains attached, now among the curiosities in the castle. They were formerly known as "Roaring Meg" and "Pretty Betty," and their use is explained in a note about the Corporation, attached to a map of Norfolk published in

1797: "Their Prison is two logs of wood with a chain to fasten them to the Prisoner, who carries them about where'er he walks!"

There is little to interest the traveller between Rising and Lynn. The main road is bordered for a little way by the heathlands and coverts of Lord Farquhar's estate, on which the King usually enjoys some good shooting in the autumn. Then the heathery wilderness of Ling Common is crossed, and South Wootton is entered, a village only notable for its church font and some fragments of an ancient hall or manor-house of the Hamonds. The church is a few minutes' walk from the main road, and has some good work of the Decorated period, but its font is a remarkable example of Norman work, its massive bowl, supported by eight circular pillars, being ornamented with some very grotesque faces. A large recessed tomb on the north side of the chancel is that of Sir Thomas Winde, who died in 1603. Within the church is kept a curious bier nearly three hundred years old. Part of the old Hall, which can be seen from the churchyard, is now converted into cottages. A stone in one of its gables bears the initials "N.H." and the date 1665.

The adjoining parishes of North and South Wootton, together with Rising and Wolferton, have had their area considerably increased during the last fifty years by the embanking and reclaiming of large tracts of salt marsh, and it is said that, if sufficient money could be raised to carry on the work, at least 2,000 acres more might be reclaimed. There are some pleasant byways leading down into the marshlands, and any one desirous of seeing how the Estuary Company has won land from the sea should go down into the

marshes and examine the great banks or sea-walls which have been heaped up by the reclaimers. The new lands, however, are at present inexpressibly dreary; far more so, indeed, than the tidal flats beyond the banks, where

> "Only the Sun-god rideth over,
> Marking the Seasons with track of flame;
> Only the wild-fowl float and hover,—
> Flocks of clouds, whose white wings cover
> Spaces on spaces without a name."

Down by the side of the salt creeks, with the distant villages and even the isolated marsh farms hidden by the sea-wall, one seems to be on the uttermost verge of a land which, despite the passage of countless ages of change, is still a part of the primeval world, awaiting the coming of man.

CHAPTER XVIII

KING'S LYNN

"Pleasantly shone the setting sun
Over the town of Lynn."
HOOD.
"Remnants of things that have passed away."
BYRON.

IN East Anglia there is probably no older town than Lynn, but how and when it came into existence no one can tell. In those remote days when England was connected with the Continent of Europe by land extending over a portion of the area now filled by the North Sea, men of the Early Stone Age seem to have inhabited the neighbourhood of South Wootton, where their rudely shaped flint implements are found in river gravels; and in later times, when England had become an island, men who used the polished stone axes and beautifully fashioned flint arrow-heads of the Neolithic period lived and hunted on the lands bordering that deltaic tract of fen and water now represented by the fertile levels of Marshland, and, as we have learnt at Hunstanton, there is evidence that these Neolithic men either dwelt or roamed in those vanished woodlands that stretched across the Wash from

Norfolk to the coast of Lincolnshire. People of some bronze-working Celtic race, too, have left traces of their presence at Lynn, Gaywood, and Rising, and it may be that the town derives its name from the Celtic *llyn*, a lake, although antiquaries and philologists differ as to the origin of the name. None of these prehistoric peoples, however, may have made any permanent settlement on the site of the present town; for a considerable portion of it was formerly uninhabitable, save by occupants of lake dwellings, and of such dwellings no trace has been discovered here; but in Saxon times the place was of some note as a seaport. It was then an adjunct of its present suburb, Gaywood, which belonged to the Saxon bishops of East Anglia, and probably carried on a profitable sea fishery, seeing that it possessed no fewer than thirty salt pans.

To-day Lynn is surrounded by marshland, and there can be little doubt that when the town came into existence it was almost an island, connected with the higher lands by artificially elevated roads or causeys. Until comparatively recent times, there was no bridge across the Ouse at Lynn, and until the mail coaches began to run there was no regular communication between the town and other parts of East Anglia and the Eastern Midlands except by way of the rivers. Defoe, when he visited Lynn, noted that "They pass over here in boats into the fen country, and over the famous washes into Lincolnshire, but the passage is often very dangerous and uneasy, and where passengers often miscarry and are lost; but then it is usually on their venturing at improper times and without the guides, which if they would be persuaded not to do, they



CUSTOM HOUSE, KING'S LYNN.

[*To face p.* 354.

would rarely fail of going or coming safe." As the town grew in importance, and more ground was required to build upon, marshes had to be drained and reclaimed from the sea. Work of this kind, akin to that of the Dutch land reclaimers, was undertaken at an early period of the town's history, and it was in progress as recently as the middle of the nineteenth century, when, by the making of a straight channel from the town to the outfall of the Ouse, a large tract of ground was gained on the right bank of the river.

The growth of Lynn during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was rapid. Herbert de Lozinga, the first Norman bishop of Norwich, gave the church and manor of Lynn to the Benedictines of Norwich, and from that time the town became known as Bishop's Lynn (Lynn Episcopi). He built a church of St. Margaret and attached it to a priory of Benedictines; but by the middle of the twelfth century the town had become so populous that it was necessary to build St. Nicholas Church as a chapel to the earlier foundation. A bishop's palace or grange was erected at Gaywood, within a moated enclosure still adjoining the Lynn Walks, a public promenade on the east side of the town; and in 1204 its builder, Bishop John de Grey, obtained from King John a charter making the town a free borough. This was the first of nineteen charters granted to the town by various monarchs. In the fourteenth century the Augustinians, the Franciscans, the Carmelites, and the Dominicans each had a monastery here. After the dissolution of the monasteries, the name of Bishop's Lynn was dropped

in favour of that of Lynn Regis or King's Lynn.

The siege of Royalist Lynn by the Parliament troops in 1643 has been described at length by local historians; but it seems to have been carried on half-heartedly, and few lives were lost in attacking or defending the town. The Royalist garrison bragged that the Earl of Manchester, who was in command of the Parliamentary force, might "as soon raise his good father from the dead as force his entrance into Lynn, so strongly was it fortified"; but the siege lasted barely three weeks, and as soon as preparations were made for a bombardment the town surrendered. The terms of surrender are set forth in the Corporation records, where we read, under date of September 28, 1643, that "Whereas upon a late treaty betwixt the Commissioners on the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Manchester's part and the Commissioners on the behalf of the borough, touching the surrendering thereof into his lordship's hands, to the use of the King and Parliament, amongst other articles in the same treaty concluded upon. . . . That ten shillings a man for all the foot soldiers and a fortnightly pay for all the officers under captains in his Lordship's army be raised and levied upon the said town of King's Lynn, the estates of the Gentlemen strangers and well-affected not being liable thereunto. . . . And whereas his Lordship by his letter under his Lordship's hand dated the 26th of this instant directed to Mr. Mayor, did require expedition of the said assessment, declaring thereby the sum to be assessed to be £2,300 to the uses aforesaid, therefore by consent of this house it is ordered that the said assessment be entered into

debate instantly and performed accordingly by such equal wages as shall be thought most fitting."

Apart from a few episodes connected with this siege, the history of Lynn as a town is unexciting, but about its history as a seaport there is some flavouring of romance. Chiefly in consequence of its unique system of inland navigation, carried on by means of the rivers, drains, and washes of the great Fen district, Lynn early became a place of considerable maritime trade; it was connected with the Hanse towns of the Baltic; and in later times its merchants were able to supply six counties entirely and three counties in part with their imported goods, and especially with wine and coal. Defoe tells us that in the early part of the eighteenth century it imported more coal than any other port between London and Newcastle, and more wines than any other port in England, save London and Bristol. As Spelman quaintly remarks, "Ceres and Bacchus seem to have established their magazines here." Among the Lynn Guilds was an important "Guild Merchant" or Merchants' Guild; also a Shipmen's Guild; and the frequency with which the aid of Lynn ships was requisitioned when England was engaged in war with foreign countries is evidence of the strength of its merchant fleet, the men-of-war, or rather transports, of those days being merely trading ships temporarily converted to naval purposes. In the reign of Edward I. a Privy Seal writ was addressed to the mayor, ordering the equipment of the ships of the port, so that they might be ready at Portsmouth "by mid-Lent next ensuing," in accordance with the instructions of the "King's Admiral towards the north";

and in the following year the town's officials were enjoined to do as the King's Admiral told them if they would escape heavy loss and their sovereign's indignation. Edward II., too, sent to the "bailiffs and good people of the town of Lenne" when news arrived that the Scots had laid siege to Berwick-on-Tweed. "We pray and charge you," he wrote, "as especially as we are able, that you will aid us sufficiently and with good will with your navy well equipped with men and victuals in aid, for the rescue of our aforesaid town." No information is accorded us as to the number of ships Lynn sent to Berwick, but a few months later we find the town in disgrace because its authorities had permitted the captains of ships to unload cargoes of wheat, rye, and other food stuffs in its haven instead of despatching them to the North for the "sustenance of the King and his 'hoste.'" During the reign of Edward III., the town was required to furnish not only one hundred of its most soldier-like and vigorous men for the defence of the Duchy of Gascogny, but a few years later its "ships, galleys, and other vessels" had to put to sea and follow the King's fleet in accordance with certain directions to be given by the bearer of the writ. At the siege of Calais Lynn was represented by 16 ships and 382 mariners.

It was during the reign of Edward III. that Nicholas of Lynn, a Franciscan friar, made that wonderful voyage in which he is said to have visited "all the regions situate under the North Pole." He set sail from "the haven of Linne in Norfolke," and "went in company with others to the most northern islands of the world, and there keeping his company together, he travelled

alone, and purposely described all the northern islands, with the indrawing seas: and the record thereof at his return he delivered to the King of England." Five times, Hakluyt states, this adventurous friar sailed northward and home again, and he is said to have discovered between the "northern islands" the "four indraughts of the ocean, from the four opposite quarters of the world." These four indraughts, he said, "were drawn into an inward gulf or whirlpool, with so great a force, that the ships which once entered therein, could by no means be driven back again"; yet, he added, "there is never in those parts so much wind blowing as might be sufficient to drive a corn-mill." In his discovery of the Maelstrom, however, he had been forestalled; for it had previously been described by Giraldus as "a bottomless pit" into which "if it chance that any ship do pass this, it is pulled, and drawn with such a violence of the waves, that eftsoons without remedy, the force of the whirlpool devoureth the same."

At an early period, Lynn sent ships to the coast of Norway to take part in the herring fishery. Their presence in Norwegian waters appears to have been resented by the local fishermen; at any rate, some of the Lynn men were arrested by the bailiff of Bergen and committed to prison, where many of them "for want of due nourishment and by reason of the extremity and loathsomeness of the prison" were "quite perished." Edward II. made an appeal to the King of Norway on behalf of his maltreated subjects, asking that they might be released and their goods returned to them; but the reply received from the King did not promise well for the im-

prisoned fishermen. "Certain sons of iniquity of the town of Lynn," he wrote, "coming, as they said, to fish for herrings," cruelly murdered a certain knight who had been his bailiff at Vikia, together with ten other of his subjects who were employed about the affairs of his kingdom. On hearing of this, King Edward promised that if these "sons of iniquity" were sent safely home to England, he would make full inquiry into the charges brought against them, and if they were found guilty they would be punished; but history is silent as to their ultimate fate. That the mariners of Lynn were accustomed to piratical practices is suggested by a complaint made by Adam le Clerk to the Mayor and the Community in the eighth year of Edward II. He stated, and his statement was borne out by twelve witnesses, that Henry Rikelinghous and others had "craftily entered his vessel called the *Plente* by the sea-coast as enemies, and slew the men being in the same ship, and took and carried off the same ship, together with its goods."

In the days when Lynn was at the height of its prosperity; when its river—there being then no dock—was filled with shipping and its narrow waterside streets were crowded with seamen from most of the principal ports of Europe, many of its merchants were wealthy men, inhabiting fine houses in which they entertained on a lavish scale and surrounded themselves with luxury. In Queen Street there is still standing a typical example of a merchant prince's house with an imposing entrance, through which a glimpse can be obtained of a sixteenth-century tower or gazebo, from the upper chambers of which the occupier of the house could watch for the appearance of the

short, clumsy, broad-bowed ships which crept up the Wash, heavily laden with the produce of foreign lands. Beneath the house is a spacious fourteenth-century vault or cellar in which, in all probability, some of the wine for which the town was famous was stored; and down by King's Staithe Square, not far from the old Custom House and the Inland Revenue Office, where paintings of some of the old Lynn ships still adorn the fireplaces, there are labyrinths of crypt-like vaults, which were formerly filled with the vintages of France, Portugal, and Spain. Another fine old house, in that Tuesday market-place which is one of the most spacious market squares in England, was built by John Turner, a Lynn vintner, in 1688: it is now the Duke's Head Hotel. Some of the Halls of the Merchants' Guilds, too, are still standing—though with one exception they are converted to baser uses than those for which they were intended—in or near the Chequer which was "the home of the Guilds"; and in narrow stone-paved byways in the southern part of the town there are several quaint houses which have seen better days. Some of the inns, too, hidden away in tortuous by-streets, are old enough to have sheltered the captains and crews of ships that entered the port of Lynn three hundred or more years ago, and not the least interesting of them is the "Greenland Fishery" in Bridge Street, a timbered house containing some curious wood-carving. The name of this ancient inn suggests that it may have been a resort of the men who manned the whaling ships in the days when Lynn had its share in the whale fishery of the northern seas; for a century ago the Lynn whalers set sail every spring for Greenland and

Davies' Straits, and it is not long since the last of the old blubber houses by the riverside was allowed to fall into decay. Defoe, who was here about 1722, makes no reference to the Lynn whalers; but the name of a famous local whaling ship of the eighteenth century is preserved in a photograph of an old mug, decorated with paintings of the ship with its boats engaged in catching a whale, and inscribed with the lines—

> "A Ship from Lynn did sail,
> And a Ship of Noble Fame;
> Captain Baxter is Commander
> The 'Baleana' (*sic*) is her name."

In 1812 Richards, a Lynn historian, stated that, three or four ships were usually sent to the Greenland whale fishery, but in that year only two were fitted out. One of these was commanded by the grandfather of that courageous explorer of Australia and South Africa, Thomas Baines, who was born here in 1822.

Lynn topographers never forget to mention that this was the native town of Fanny Burney, whose father was organist of St. Margaret's Church; but they overlook the fact that it was on the quays of Lynn that her brother, Captain James Burney, first came in touch with ships and sailors, and probably felt the spell of that romantic side of seafaring which, in after years, when he himself had had experience of a life afloat, inspired him to write that stirring account of maritime adventures, "The History of the Buccaneers of America." That popular book was only one of five volumes issued by Burney between 1803 and 1817, and which were collectively entitled "A Chronological History of the Voyages

and Discoveries in the South Seas or Pacific Ocean." They contain more stories of daring adventure than are to be found in any work previously published, save the weighty tomes of Richard Hakluyt and Samuel Purchas; and if the "Principal Navigations" may be called "our English epic," surely Burney's work, though in part neglected and almost forgotten, may be described as a fitting memorial to the daring seafarers whose voyages and exploits it recounts. Numerous histories of the buccaneers had already appeared when he set himself the task of writing the true story of their lives; but they were "boastful compositions," which had delighted in exaggeration, and, what was more mischievous, they had "lavished commendation on acts which deserved reprobation," and had "endeavoured to raise miscreants, notorious for their want of humanity, to the rank of heroes." It was his endeavour to present their lives in a true light, and in that he succeeded; so that while we condemn their cruelty and rapacity, we admire their perseverance and hardihood. Lynn folk might at least be pardoned for believing that while Fanny Burney was beginning her "Early Diary" in the "look-out" attached to her Lynn home, her brother, who was two years her senior, was, while watching the ships coming up and going down the river, unconsciously equipping himself to become an historian of those who go down to the sea in ships.

While James Burney was still a boy, seeking, in all probability, the company of sailors on the ships and quays of Lynn, there was born in the town one who was to rank among the greatest of British navigators. This was George Vancouver,

who gave his name to the great island now forming part of British Columbia, and of whom it has been truly said that "he may proudly take his place with Drake, Cook, Baffin, Parry, and other British navigators, to whom England looks with pride and geographers with gratitude." The town has no monument to this famous seaman; but in the church at Petersham, Surrey, where he is buried, there is one that was erected by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1841.

In 1722 Lynn was described as a "rich and populous thriving port-town" situated on a "mighty large and deep" river, so that "ships of good burden" could come up to its quay. By way of the Ouse and other rivers of Fenland, which were navigated by great numbers of barges, coal, wine, and other imports were conveyed to Thetford, Bury St. Edmunds, Cambridge, Ely, St. Ives, St. Neot's, Bedford, and Peterborough, while canals and washes connected the town with Spalding, Market Deeping, and Stamford. The lower part of the Ouse, opposite and few miles below Lynn, then constituted "Lynn Haven," on the shores of which ships were built and hauled up for repairs. Although no dock had been made, the trade of the port was great, and it showed no falling off until the railways robbed the town of a large amount of its commerce by making the inland towns independent of its sea-borne goods. For some time after the railways were constructed the trade of the town was in a state of stagnation. Its "little-used harbour, its gaunt neglected warehouses and granaries, and its numerous untenanted houses, told a sad tale of all but hopeless desolation." About fifty years ago, however, the Alexandra Dock was opened, and in 1883 the

larger Bentinck Dock was constructed, causing a slight increase of trade. Lynn was greatly improved as a port by the making of the Eau Brink Cut—which straightened and widened the river above the town—and of the wide embanked channel leading directly from the harbour to the sea; but at present it seems unlikely that these great improvements will bring about a revival of commercial prosperity.

Of late years, although the docks have not been so full of shipping as their proprietors have wished to see them, the general trade of the port has been considerable, and if the harbour cannot be said to have such a busy appearance as it had in the days when three or four hundred small sailing ships could be seen moored to its quays or riding in the tideway, the presence of large barques and steamers, laden with foreign timber, grain, and raw and manufactured goods, proves that there is still some life in the port of Lynn. Every modern appliance for the loading and unloading of ships is provided by the Docks Company, and although busy scenes may often be witnessed, everything is done in an easy, mechanical way, and there is none of that rollicking humour and boisterous horseplay which characterised the arrival and departure of the deep-sea sailing ships in the old days. In fact, the steamers of to-day make their passages with such railway-like punctuality that no one ever doubts when they will arrive or sail; and wives and sweethearts stay at home when a ship is due, well knowing that their husbands and lovers will be there in time for dinner or tea. Very different was the behaviour of the women-folk in the old days, as is recorded in a communication made to

the Folk Lore Society by a writer* who states that "At a time when there were no docks at Lynn, and all ships trading to the port moored in the harbour, I have seen groups of women, no doubt the wives and sweethearts of the sailors, watching for the arrival or departure of a ship. Each carried in her hand a key, generally, apparently, the key of the house door; and if she was watching for a vessel expected 'up with the tide,' she would, by inserting one finger in the bow of it, and placing a finger of the other hand in the angle of the wards and the stem, continue turning the key towards herself until the vessel arrived, or until the tide turned, and its coming was, for a time, hopeless. The object of the winding motion was to bring the vessel home. If, however, the person was watching the departure of a ship, the key would be turned in the same manner, but in the contrary direction, viz., from the holder, which act was supposed to invoke good luck for the vessel and the crew. I have little doubt that the custom is still (1891) observed, though now probably to only a limited extent."

The Lynn sea fisheries are of small importance and there is no special accommodation for the boats engaged in them. Most of them, when they are not out after smelts, shrimps, and shellfish, lie in a narrow, picturesque channel near the docks, called Fisher Fleet—a favourite spot with artists, though a somewhat malodorous one, of which the average sightseeing visitor is glad to take leave in order to enjoy a bracing walk along the wind-swept river-wall towards the point where the river enters the wider waters of the Wash. Or, having seen the docks, the famous custom-house, and everything

* Mr. W. B. Gerish.

pertaining to the port of Lynn, he may prefer to return into the heart of the town, and there see something of its antiquities and especially of its two fine churches and its unique Red Mount Chapel.

The parish church of St. Margaret, standing in the Saturday market-place, occupies the site of the church founded by Bishop Herbert de Lozinga. Its finest feature is its grand west front, consisting of a splendid fifteenth-century window and spacious main entrance, flanked by two towers resting on some of the Norman work of those built during the episcopate of Bishop Turbus (1146–1174). Of these towers that on the south side of the entrance is the more interesting, on account of its beautiful and well-preserved work of the Transition-Norman and Early English periods. This tower formerly had a lofty spire, which was blown down in 1741, and in its fall destroyed the nave of the church and did considerable damage to the aisles. In consequence, the nave was rebuilt on the bases of the old pillars, George II. and Sir Robert Walpole each contributing a thousand pounds towards its restoration. There is nothing particularly noteworthy about this comparatively modern work, but the fourteenth-century screen-work dividing the choir aisles from the choir is good, and a number of old misereres are interesting, some of them being carved with heads of Edward III., Queen Philippa, and the Black Prince. On the prior's stall, near the entrance, is a portrait of Henry le Spencer, the militant Bishop of Norwich (1370–1406). The east window is a circular one, inserted during the fifteenth century, and the reredos is very elaborate. The organ is a famous one. It was originally built by Snetzler, on the

recommendation of Dr. Burney, author of the "History of Music," who at the time was organist of the church. It was the largest organ made by its eminent builder, and it contained the first dulciana stop introduced into England. It has since been entirely reconstructed, but the fine front of the eighteenth-century instrument has been retained.

St. Margaret's Church is chiefly famous for its two magnificent fourteenth-century brasses. These were formerly in the chancel, but some years ago they were removed into the base of the south tower, where they are not seen to advantage owing to a lack of light. The earlier brass is that of Adam de Walsoken, who died in 1349. He and his wife are represented on it; in niches at the sides are figures of Prophets and the twelve Apostles; and in the lower part is a rustic scene, supposed to be either a vintage harvest or the gathering of apples on a monastic farm. The other brass, dated 1364, is to Robert Braunche and his two wives, Letitia and Margaret, who are represented under rich canopies, with eight weepers in male and female costumes. This is commonly called the "Peacock Brass," because its lower part represents a banquet at which the principal dish, a peacock, is being placed before the chief guest by a man, probably intended for Braunche himself, who is straddling across the table. Edward III. was entertained at Lynn by Braunche during his mayoralty, and the peacock feast is believed to be the one given by the mayor to his royal guest. This brass measures 10 feet by 5 feet, the other being slightly larger. Both are Flemish work, and made in sections for convenience of packing and transport. Formerly the

church possessed a third brass, of equal magnificence, to Robert Attelath, but it is said to have been sold for five shillings by a dishonest sexton, who, the story goes, hanged himself through remorse. A rubbing of the missing brass is preserved in the British Museum.

Apart from the splendid brasses, the memorials in St. Margaret's are not very interesting, though some of them, erected to the memory of wealthy merchants and their wives, are quaintly inscribed. As a specimen of epitaphian humour, the punning inscription "Pensez puys parlez," on the monument of Margaret Parlet, is noteworthy; while the fact that the body of Edward Bodham, merchant, who died "beyond the Seas in Norway, by the care of his loving wife Gardrut was brought over and here interred in his native place" in 1704, reminds one of the experiences of the unfortunate Lynn fishermen of Edward II.'s reign, and suggests that the air of "Norroway over the faem" has on more than one occasion proved too keen for folk from the flat fenlands. The most curious of Lynn epitaphs is no longer discoverable, though it is said to have been inscribed on the tombstone of a Corporation cook who was buried in St. Margaret's churchyard. It ran:—

"Alas! Alas! Will Scrivener's dead, who, by his art,
Could make Death's skeleton edible in each part.—
Mourn, squeamish stomachs, and ye curious palates,
You've lost your dainty dishes and your sallets;
Mourn for yourselves, but not for him i' th' least—
He's gone to taste of a more heavenly feast."

Hardly a trace is left of the Benedictine priory which stood on the south side of the church, nor is

anything to be seen of the fourteenth-century charnel chapel in which the Grammar School was conducted at the time when Eugene Aram was employed as one of its under-masters. In its place one sees some unsightly shambles, with a reading-room above, spoiling the view of the church from the market-place.

St. Nicholas' Church is in some respects a finer building than St. Margaret's, although it embodies hardly a fragment of work of earlier date than the fifteenth century. The most striking feature of its exterior is its richly ornamented porch, while within, the perfect proportions of the building and the fine effect of the slender columns and lofty arches of the nave are noticeable. The east and west windows are fine, especially the former, a magnificent one of eleven lights. Formerly there was much old carved wood-work, but the greater part of it was removed some fifty years ago: a few bench-ends and a portion of the screen remain to prove that the original furniture of the church was worthy of it. The monuments are more interesting than those of St. Margaret's. Perhaps the finest is that to Thomas and Susanna Green. "The sculpture," writes the Rev. E. Farrer in his "Church Heraldry of Norfolk," is of very high quality; the face of the lady, so stern and yet so comely, is like a Rembrandt in stone. Every detail is attended to; the lace on the kerchief over her head is beautifully wrought, as is the collar of her husband. The same care is taken with the hands and drapery of both. The monument is coloured; the cushions are green; his alderman's gown scarlet, and her dress is black." The late Mr. Beloe, an historian of Lynn, suggests that the architectural portion of this

monument is by Henry Bell, the designer of the custom-house. A remarkable monument, in the form of a large urn, is that of Sir Benjamin Keene, whose portrait is in the Guildhall. He was the son of a Lynn merchant, and British Ambassador to Spain ; he died at Madrid in 1757. The composer of the epitaph to Thomas Snelling, mayor of Lynn, who died in 1623, commits himself so far as to state that Snelling was "sometimes a worthy merchant of London"; but he is more easily forgiven than the perpetrator of the following lines on the monument of another seventeenth-century mayor, Richard Clark :—

"Here lyeth interred the aged Richard Clark,
Who served late Queen Eliza thirty years,
As Searcher and Collector of this Porte ;
And who besides (as in Record appeares)
Was sometymes Alderman, Justice of ye Peace,
And Maior. Here his Travayles all did cease.
His first wife, Jane, to Thomas Parker borne,
Of Norwich (where her vitall thread made breach),
Matthew, thear sonne (but now her Dayes are worne)
Married Sarah, daughter of Richard Leach,
Her mother, mach'd with Thomas Boston, who
Was likewise Maior, and from like frendes did floe.
This Mathew Clarck, by Sarah Children had
Twice three and one, two Sonnes and Daughters five,
Two daughters here are with Earthes Mantle clad,
The rest (God have the praise) doe yet survive.
Thus here Belowe Ould, Yonge and Meane doe dy;
Looke thou above, and thears Æternity."

There are several floor slabs, including one to Robinson Cruso, who died in 1794. Another is to Thomas Hollingworth (1779), described as having been "an eminent bookseller, a man of the strictest integrity in his dealings, and much esteemed by gentlemen of taste for the neatness and elegance of his binding."

The most remarkable building in Lynn is the Chapel of St. Mary-on-the-Hill, better known as the "Red Mount Chapel." This curious little chapel, as ugly outside as it is beautiful within, is partly embedded in an artificial mound in the public Walks. It was built about 1485 by Robert Curraunce, and consists of a red-brick octagonal tower containing an exquisite little cruciform chapel of stone, measuring 18 feet from east to west, 14 feet from north to south, and 13 feet in height. The roof almost exactly resembles that of King's College Chapel, Cambridge, and its workmanship is of a very high order. This perfect church in miniature has beneath it a vestry with a small chapel attached, while in the basement of the tower, below the level of the top of the mound, is another chapel or vault in a state of decay. The whole structure is quite unique so far as England is concerned, and the precise purpose for which it was erected has never been definitely determined; it has generally been supposed that it was intended for the use of pilgrims who landed at Lynn on their way to Walsingham. It had not been in existence quite a hundred years when its lower part was used as a conduit, and it afterwards served as a stable. In 1638 it became a powder magazine, and in 1643, when the town was besieged, it was called the Mount Fort. About twenty years later it was a pest-house, and in 1783 a teacher of navigation used it, and made a hole in the north wall in order to get up on to the roof. Of late years an interesting mediæval revival has taken place in connection with it and the Roman Catholic Church at Lynn, where there is a shrine of Our Lady, which is a reproduction of the famous one at Walsingham. On the 25th



WEST GATE, KING'S LYNN.

[*To face p.* 372.

of May there is a pilgrimage of devout Roman Catholics to this beautiful shrine, from which, after a celebration of High Mass in the church, the pilgrims go in procession to the Red Mount Chapel, the image of Our Lady, a good example of carved work from Oberammergau, being carried by a group of girls dressed in white, while priests in splendid vestments, attended by acolytes and thurifers, help to make the scene striking and picturesque.

One of the old town gateways of Lynn Episcopi, the West Gate, is still standing. It was built about 1437, and has two archways, one for vehicles and the other for foot-passengers. It is massive and well-preserved, with a guard-room above the main arch. Close beside it is the Honest Lawyer Inn, on the sign of which the man of law is represented carrying his head under his arm. About midway between the West Gate and the Town Hall, in St. James's Street, is an interesting fragment of the town's monastic buildings, the Greyfriars Tower—a lantern tower about 90 feet high, supported by arches of red brick. It is of Perpendicular date, but the Franciscan monastery to which it belonged was founded in 1264. Imaginative writers have suggested that the tower was used by that famous astronomer and navigator, Nicholas of Lynn, as an observatory, but Nicholas, although a native of the town, is generally described by old writers as a "friar of Oxford."

The Town Hall, which embodies the fine old Hall of the Trinity Guild, is a building well worthy of the ancient borough of which it is the seat of government. Dating from the early part of the fifteenth century, this fine building has undergone considerable alteration, and its council chamber and

some other portions are modern; but its exterior retains its original flint and stone chequer work, and its main entrance has a striking Renaissance porch, added during the latter part of the sixteenth century. A large Perpendicular window admits the light to the central stone hall, in which the meetings and banquets of the Guild were held; below it are some smaller windows which lighted the larders and kitchens. Besides the stone hall there are other fine rooms, the assembly-room being especially notable for its splendid chandeliers, and the card-room for its magnificent mirror and its busts of the King and Queen. These and other apartments are hung with several portraits, among them being those of Kings John, Charles I., William II., and George III. Sir Robert Walpole, who was for a time Lynn's member of Parliament, is represented by a portrait said to be by Sir Godfrey Kneller, while his son Horace, who also "sat for" Lynn, is included in the local gallery. Other portraits are those of Nelson, "after Beechey," and Sir Benjamin Keene.

The famous "King John's Cup," with other plate, insignia, relics, and curiosities belonging to the Corporation, is preserved in a detached strong-room, where it can be seen with the permission—usually cheerfully granted—of the mayor or the town clerk. This beautiful cup is of silver-gilt, embossed and enamelled, and weighs with the cover 73 oz. Traditionally, it is said to have been given to the town by King John just before he made his disastrous crossing of the Wash, but its design, figures, and workmanship prove it to date from about the middle of the fourteenth century, *temp.* Edward III. The figures on the lid represent a hunting party, and on the body and base

of the cup are numerous figures in enamel of men and women engaged in hunting and hawking, also of dogs chasing hares and foxes. At the bottom of the cup, inside, is a bacchanalian figure holding in one hand a drinking horn and in the other a hawk. In reference to the King John legend, Mr. W. Rye states: "King John's Cup and Sword are shown at Lynn as relics of the scoundrel who was ruined at the Wash hard by, and the articles undoubtedly belonged to a King John, but it was John of France, erstwhile prisoner at Castle Rising, centuries after." *

The sword in question has a long two-edged straight steel blade, with a cross-guard to the hilt, plated with silver. An inscription on one side states that it was given by King John, who took it from his side; on the other side is the inscription "Vivat Rex Henricus Octavus, Anno Regni sui XX," supposed to have been added in the reign of Henry VIII. The date of this sword is doubtful, but a sword has been carried before the mayor since the granting of King John's charter in 1204. The late Mr. E. M. Beloe believed it to be not earlier than the reign of Richard II. Other interesting objects in the strong-room are a large silver-gilt loving-cup with cover, made in Nuremberg; the mayor's chain, dating from about 1550 and formed of dragon-head links suspending a shield of the town arms; a similar chain worn by the ex-mayor; four large silver maces made in 1711–1712 by Benjamin Pyne, a noted goldsmith; some old tankards and corporate and mayoral seals dating from about 1300.

The Corporation Records keep company with the plate and insignia in the strong-room. The minute-

* "Norfolk Songs, Stories, and Sayings," p. 94.

books date back to 1431, and there are chamberlain's and guild rolls from the thirty-fifth year of Edward I. With these are kept all the charters which have been granted to the town since the second charter of King John. A letters patent dated 1st December, 20 Henry VI., has a beautifully drawn initial letter surmounted by the king's crown, with the legend *Dieu et Mon Droit* on the head-band, while below the floreated letter the draughtsman has depicted in pen-and-ink an angel bearing the shield of the arms of Lynn. There is also a beautifully illuminated charter of the reign of Charles II. The most interesting document preserved here is, however, a charter in Latin and Saxon of privileges granted by King Cnut to the monks of St. Edmundsbury. The Saxon part of it has been translated into modern English as follows :—

"In the name of the Almighty Lord, I, Cnut, king, make known to all men concerning the counsel which I have taken with my counsellors for my soul's need and for the benefit of all my people, that is to say:—That I grant eternal freedom to the holy king Edmund in such wise henceforth as he had it heretofore in the place where he rests, and I will that this freedom stand in his dominion unchanged, from the power of every bishop of the shire whatsoever eternally free. And so often as men pay army-money or ship-money let the township pay, according as other men do, to the behoof of the monks, who shall therein serve (God) in our behalf. And we have chosen that no man shall ever convert the place to the use of men of another order, unless he would be cut off from the communion of God and all His saints. And I grant to the monks for their

nourishment all the fishery which Ulfkytel owned at Wylla, and all my toll of fish which arises to me along the sea-coast. And my queen Ælgyfu grants to the saints four thousand eels with their services which pertain to them, at Lakinge hithe. And I grant to them jurisdiction over all their townships in all their land, which they now have, and may henceforth acquire by God's grace." The late Mr. J. Cordy Jeaffreson, who examined and reported upon the Lynn records on behalf of the Historical Manuscripts Commission, says* of this remarkable charter: "Regarded with suspicion by Kemble, and pronounced a forgery by Hickes, this interesting document may be said to have recovered the confidence of Saxon scholars through the critical judgment and ingenuity of the late Mr. C. W. Goodwin, who offered cogent reasons for thinking it a genuine performance, in a paper to be found in the fourth volume of 'Norfolk Archæology.'" There is also among the Lynn muniments a Latin charter, purporting to be a confirmation of Cnut's charter, by his son Hardecnut. This document Mr. Goodwin pronounced to be one of the ingenious forgeries of which the monastic scriptoria were fruitful. Both documents are known to have been at Bury so late as 1536, and it is assumed that they came into the possession of the Lynn Corporation with the title-deeds of some property at Brandon, which was bought by the Corporation and formerly belonged to Bury Abbey.

The oldest Lynn records are contained in the "Red Book of Bishop's Lenn" or "Red Register of Lynn," a register of wills and book of remem-

* "Manuscripts of the Corporations of Southampton and King's Lynn," p. 185.

brances commencing with the thirty-fifth year of Edward I. and ending with the nineteenth year of Richard II. This is a large folio, now bound with Russia leather, and containing 189 numbered leaves. It is one of the oldest English paper books, and an entry in it suggests that it was used as a register of records before the date of its earliest entry, and that some pages have been lost. "Throughout the earlier portion of what remains to us of the Register," writes Mr. Cordy Jeaffreson, "the entries touching wills are interspersed with transcripts of grants and agreements (municipal or private), memoranda of matters done in the Gild Hall Assemblies or the Hustings Court, and notes of affairs that were important to the people of Bishop's Lenn in the fourteenth century." One of these memoranda, regarding the piratical exploits of Henry de Rikelinghous and others, has already been quoted in this chapter. A few others are not without interest, among them being the following:—

"Memorandum that two cups of mazer, a silver wine-cup, and a vessel for holy water were taken from Ralph de Fuldone, for his arrear for talliages, from the time of Thomas de Setheford (or Secheford) mayor, and that on Friday in the week of Pentecost in the 6th year of the reign of Edward the son of Edward Henry de Holt and Thomas de Bauseye came and bought the same 'vadia' for forty shillings, which they paid immediately in the time of Lambert de St. Omer then mayor."

"9 Edward III.—Memorandum that on Friday next following the Feast of All Saints. . . . Stephen of Kent came into the Gild Hall and acknowledged himself guilty of trespass against

the Mayor and the community, in selling wine for eightpence a gallon, when all taverns were selling it for sixpence a gallon; and that the community pardoned him the same trespass, on his engagement to give the community a tun of wine, should he ever offend again in like manner."

"27 September, 3 Henry VI.—And afterwards the Mayor sought what should be done with the male prisoner, who had maliciously allowed the salt water to enter the common ditch: and it was agreed that the culprit should be put on the pillory, and afterwards should be required to abjure the town."

In other assembly books there are interesting entries, one of which concerns a visit paid to Lynn by Cardinal Wolsey: "Memorandum, that the Monday the xxti day of August in the xiith year of the reigne of Kyng Henry the VIIIti, the tyme of Robert Gerves Mayer of Lenn. The Most Reverent Father in God Thomas Lord Cardynall Legate a latere Archebysshope of York, Primate and Chaunceler of England with the Bysshope of Ely and a Bysshope of Irland, with many knyghtes and esquyers com' to Lenn, Which Lord Cardynall &c. was met on the caunsy beyond Gaywood brigge with the Mayre and commons of Lenn, Which Lord Cardynall was presented at Hulyns Place with xxti dosen brede, vi soys of ale, xv barelles of beer, a tonn and xii galon of wyne, ii oxen, xxti shepe, x signettes, xii capons, iii botores (bitterns), iii shovelerdes (spoonbills), xiii plovers, viii pykes, and iii tenches, and on the next Wednesday after the seyd Lord Cardynall with the forseyd Bisshops knightes and esquyers departed, and the forseyd Mayor and commoinaltye brought the seyd Lord Cardynall

beyound Hardewyk churche and ther departed from the seyd Lord Cardynall with gret laude and thankes.—Summa Totalis.—xxiili vid. payd for the charges of the seyd present, with rewardes geven to diverse officers of the seyd Lord Cardynall."

Seven years later Mary Tudor, sister of Henry VIII., widow of Louis XII. of France, and wife of Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, was entertained here. "Friday before the Feast of Epiphany, 19 Henry VIII.—This day the whole company beforerehersed ben aggred that the Frenche Quene and the Duc of Suffolk shalbe presented at the White Freers with ii hoggeshedes of wyne, iiij swannes, with other wylde fowle."

There are two events in connection with the history of Lynn of which we would gladly learn the full significance, but the time has gone by when the doubts about them could have been set at rest. One would like to know for what purpose "Sir Walter Raleigh and his company" came to the town on the 18th of July, 1589, when he was entertained by Mr. Sandell, the mayor; also whether, in the previous year, when the town fitted up the ship *Mayflower* to take part in the protection of the country against the Armada, it was that famous *Mayflower* which, thirty-two years later, carried the Pilgrim Fathers to America. As Mr. Rye has pointed out, "Ships were stoutly built in those days; Boston is only just across the water from Lynn, and the old ship may easily have changed hands from one port to another."

A curious entry refers to some of the methods resorted to for preventing the spreading of contagious diseases: "24 May 1585.—Foras muche

as it hath pleased Allmightie God to begynn to send us his visitacion with sickenes amongst us, and that dogges and cattes are thought verie unfitt to be suffered in this tyme, Therefore Mr. Maior, aldermen and comon councell have ordered and decreed that every Inhabitant within the same Town shall forthwith take all their dogges and yappes, and hange them or kill them, and carrye them to some out-place and burye them for breadinge of a greater anoyaunce, but onlie such as have a dogge of accompte, that will keep the same kenelled or tied up, or not to come abrode, unless the same be led in a lease, otherwise the same to be killed fourthwith by such as shalbe appointed for that purpose (except the dogges of Straungers comyng into this Town with their Master, not knowing of this order). And likewise for cattes, if there be any nigh unto any house or houses visited with sickenes in this towne, for that thei be very daungerous to infecte sound and cleare houses. Therefore it is likewise ordered that the cattes shall furthwith be killed in all such places."

It is rather surprising to discover in the Corporation a patron of literature:—

"16 December, 1631.—Allso itt is granted that the chamberlyns shall pay unto Hester Ogden, the late daughter of Doctor Fulk deceased towards the newe reprintinge of the books of her said father five pounds."

"7 August, 1657.—It is this day ordered that the chamberlyns doe pay unto Mris. Wheelock the summe of twenty shillings as a gratuity to her in consideration of a booke presented by her to this house being the 4 Gospells in the Pertian Language, the worke of her deceased husband."

The interest and value of the Lynn Hall books chiefly attaches to entries respecting the electoral usages of the town. So long ago as 1832 Mr. Hudson Gurney, an antiquary, pointed out that on at least two occasions in the reign of Henry VI. the burgesses representing Lynn in Parliament were chosen by a committee of twelve men; but it was not until Mr. Cordy Jeaffreson made his researches in the archives of the Corporation that the length of the period was ascertained, during which the ordinary freemen of the borough had no direct voice in choosing their parliamentary representatives. From the seventh year of Edward II. until the beginning of the reign of Henry VIII. this all-powerful committee seems to have held sway over the town, and although the whole body of the burgesses in assembly subsequently exercised the powers that had been in the hands of the "twelve," and on the occasion of the election of members for the Cromwellian Parliaments of 1642 and 1647 all the freemen or "burgesses-at-large," as they were slightingly called, "had their voyces in the choice," it was not until 1660 that the overbearing "Potentiores" were compelled by the strength of public opinion to admit the right of the freemen to vote at a parliamentary election. The Hall books also contain much interesting information about the wages paid to members of Parliament. "Changing with the gradual depreciation of current money," writes Mr. Cordy Jeaffreson, "the wages paid to burgesses of parliament for the borough rose from two to five shillings a day to each burgess, for each day spent either in attendance on the parliament, or in travelling to or fro between the parliament or

the borough; and in a few cases the municipal allowance to a burgess of parliament was as much as ten shillings a day."

To dip into the pages of these curious and valuable old records—there is no need to go to the original volumes, for the Historical Manuscripts Commission has made all that is interesting in them easily accessible—is to return to the highways and byways of Lynn better able to appreciate their charm and interest. In imagination one brings back to them the powerful "Potentiores," those civic dignitaries who so proudly paced them in the old days, yet whose names survive only in the ancient records and, in a few instances, on the massive monuments affixed to the walls of the churches of Lynn. Their day is over and they are forgotten; their places are taken by a feebler folk whose part in the ceremonies of civic life too often seems mere mummery; one cannot take them half so seriously as they take themselves. The robes and chains of office which became the portly merchant-prince of Queen Elizabeth's reign rarely dignify his twentieth-century successor, who when he dons the quaint three-cornered hat can ill conceal the ass's ears. *Tempora mutantur, et nos mutamur in illis.* The men who made Lynn famous and prosperous —who built for themselves stately houses and, while they ignored the "Mediocres" and oppressed the dependent humble folk, did what seemed best to them, and had a share in the making of England—have few legitimate successors. Yet, although the town has lost much of its ancient dignity and interest, enough survives to tempt the sentimental traveller to linger in its narrow streets and dream of its vanished glory. It has

been said of the town,* "Lynn emerges from the meadows, from the fen, and from the sea like the 'spires and turrets' of Canning's simile, as though a wave had subsided and left its fair towers uncovered." Like Boston, Ely, Wisbech and other once isolated towns of the great Fen district, it is still, despite the connecting links of railway, self-contained and self-satisfied; its life runs in a narrow groove—or rather revolves in a small circle, hedged about by old-established conventions, narrow-mindedness and pride. It no longer looks to its sea-borne trade to re-establish it among the great ports of the kingdom, and having no other means of regaining commercial eminence, it drowses amid the relics of its former greatness.

* "Sandringham, Past and Present," by Mrs. Herbert Jones, p. 172.

CHAPTER XIX

MARSHLAND

"Horizon-bounded plains succeed
Far as the eye discerns, withouten end."
BYRON.

"The wide sea did wave
An untumultuous fringe of silver foam
Along the flat brown sand."
KEATS.

BEYOND the artificial channel by way of which the waters of the Ouse now enter the sea, there lies a flat and fertile country that still goes by the name of Marshland, though thousands of acres of its once-waterlogged land have long been cultivated and fine crops of grain are produced where formerly little would grow save rush and sedge. It forms a considerable portion of Fenland, and although it was the first tract of that great Level to be reclaimed, it was subject to frequent inundation by the sea until comparatively recent times. The Romans appear to have been the earliest land-reclaimers,* employing, in all probability, the conquered Britons to

* Dugdale, in writing to Sir Thomas Browne in 1658, gives his ideas of how Marshland came into existence. "I shall now tell you how I do conclude that it became fen, by the stagnation of the fresh waters; which is thus, viz., that the sea having its passage upon the ebbs and flows thereof, along

construct causeys across the fens and banks to keep out the sea; they were, in fact, the makers of Marshland, though of a much smaller Marshland than we see to-day; for some of the banks they made along what was then the shore of the Wash are now several miles from the sea. In Saxon times several villages came into existence on the drier tracts of this reclaimed level land between Wisbech and Lynn, and that these villages became something more than mere marsh hamlets, inhabited by fishermen and fowlers, is evidenced by their splendid Norman and fifteenth-century

by the coast of Norfolke to the coast of Lincolnshire, did in time, by reason of its muddiness, leave a shelfe or silt, betwixt those two points of land, viz., Rising in Norfolk, and the country about Spilsby in Lincolnshire, which shelfe increasing in height and length so much, as that the ordinary tides did not overflow it, was by that check of those fluxes, in time, so much augmented in breadth, that the Romans finding it considerable for the fertility of the soyle (being a people of great ingenuity and industry) made the first sea-banks for its preservation from the spring tides, which might otherwise overflow it. And now, sir, by this settling of the silt the soyle of Marshland and Holland had their first beginning; by the like excesse of silt brought into the mouths of these rivers which had their out-falls at Linne, Wisbiche, and Boston, where the fresh waters so stop'd, as that the ordinary land-floods being not of force enough to grinde it out (as the term is) all the levell behind became overflowed; and as an ordinary pond gathered mud, so did this do moore which in time hath increased to such a thicknesse that since the Podike was made to keep up the fresh water from drowing of Marshland on the other side, and the bank called South Ea Bank, for the preservation of Holland from the like inundation, the levell of the fen is become 4 foot higher than the level of Marshland, as Mr. Vermuyden assures me, upon view and observation thereof. And this, under correction of your better judgment, whereunto I shall much submit, do I take to be the original occasion of Marshland and Holland, and likewise of the fens."

churches. In Fenland generally the most important settlements were established on fen islands, such as Ely and Crowland, where monasteries were founded and towns grew up around them; but in Marshland there was firm ground on the very verge of the Great Level, and it was only when the sea broke through the banks that the villages were temporarily "drowned." The protective works of the early reclaimers, however, while they benefited the coast-dwellers, made matters worse for the inhabitants of the low country lying further inland. The salt water was kept out, but nothing was done to prevent floods caused by heavy rains. Until the outfalls of the rivers were improved, the greater part of the Fen country remained waterlogged, and for several centuries it seemed as though it must continue so for all time.

This is not the place in which to re-tell, even in the most cursory way, the story of the draining of the fens, but some incidents belonging to it may find their way into a brief description of the few miles of Marshland lying between Lynn and the Lincolnshire border. Nor can much be said about the seashore of Marshland, which is just like that of the other side of the Wash, at the Woottons and Wolferton—huge banks keeping out the sea, unreclaimed salt marshes outside them and reclaimed pasture within. That these banks are wonders of engineering every one will admit, and no one can fail to recognise the debt the fen folk owe to Telford, Rennie, and the other engineers who constructed them; but such huge ramparts, raised against the ancient enemy of Marshland, give a tame, monotonous appearance to the seashore and emphasise the artificiality of the land won from the waves. An undulating

line of high-heaped sand-hills, covered with a ragged vesture of maram and lyme grass, and decked with the prickly sea-holly, the pink and white sea-bindweed, and the yellow blossoms of the horned sea-poppy, makes a natural barrier against sea encroachment which is far less wearying to the eye than the level bank that mile after mile marks the limit of the sea.

To read the history of the Fens, and then go down into them from the uplands of Norfolk, Suffolk, or Cambridgeshire, is often to be disappointed by what one sees of them. To appreciate Fenland one should go there without any preconceived idea of it, and then reconstruct in one's mind the conditions that obtained in the pre-reclamation days. The chronicles of the monks of Ely, the records of wildfowl-driving and duck-decoying, and such stories as "Hereward the Wake," "The Camp of Refuge," and "The Settlers at Home" are calculated to raise one's hopes too high, and the reader, turning from romance and romantic history to actual conditions, may find the latter commonplace. For to-day there is more true fen in certain parts of the Norfolk Broads district than in the whole of the 1,300 square miles of the Great Level, and the first impressions one gets of the country lying within the sea-walls of the Wash differ very little from those obtainable in many hill-less districts that have never, within historical times, been "drowned" by the sea. In the ancient and beautiful churches, the Tudor halls, the old-fashioned thatch-roofed cottages, and the well-grown trees there is nothing suggestive of changed conditions or impermanent tenure, and in the fenman of the twentieth century one can trace little resem-

blance to the semi-aquatic fen-dweller whose curious and primitive methods of gaining a livelihood seem so romantic to those who read the history of the Fens. The true Fens have almost entirely disappeared, and with them the fenmen who struggled so hard against the reclaimer and all his works. The fine wide level roads, the well-kept fruitful farms, the well-drained meadows and the substantial houses of the fen farmers have little about them to remind one of the wide wilderness of reeds and water which surrounded the almost inaccessible Fen islands, and, as in Holland, one must stand on some great sea-bank, with the sea on one hand and a far-spreading level on the other, to realise what a change has been brought about and how it has been done. Then the wonder of it all impresses one strongly, and the more one thinks about it, reads about it and dreams about it, the greater becomes the fascination of the Fens.

In Dugdale's "History of Imbanking and Draining" we see an old "mapp" showing the Great Level as it lay "drowned." From the north-west border of the Breckland warrens to Peterborough, and from Wisbech nearly to Newmarket and St. Ives, the map has dark shading, indicating that over nearly the whole of that large area the land lay water-soaked, only the Isle of Ely, the towns of Littleport, Downham, March, and two or three others, with the abbey lands of Thorney and Crowland, and a few isolated islets, rising above the level of the vast tract of swamp and water which was once well-wooded land and has now become the same again. Many centuries before Vermuyden's day there were oak forests in Fenland, and the elm, the birch, the

yew and other trees flourished there. Even in prehistoric times the natural conditions allowed of the establishment of settlements in the district; but before the famous Dutchman set to work to drain the Great Level the fens had become more fitting places for fish to spawn in and wild-fowl to breed in than for human habitation. The fen-dwellers, however, had no desire to see a single swamp or mere drained; to them a bittern was more than a bullock, a shoveler than a sheep. By duck-decoying, wildfowl-driving, fish-netting, ruff-snaring and eel-catching they gained as good a livelihood as they wished for, and even shivering fits of ague and joint-racking attacks of rheumatism did not induce them to accept such advice as Horace Walpole gave to a Fenland friend—to give up walking on stilts and "come to shore." When schemes for reclaiming the fens were promoted, the fishers and fowlers did their best to disparage the work; but those enterprising men, the "undertakers" or "adventurers," were not to be dissuaded from carrying out their plans, and although they had great difficulties to contend with, these did not prove insurmountable; so that to-day there is only one small tract of the whole wide Level where the old conditions obtain, and where one can see what a considerable portion of Norfolk, Suffolk, Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire was like in the pre-reclamation days. Wicken Fen, however, lies far away from the route of the coast-rambler, who, as he crosses Marshland from Lynn to Sutton Bridge, sees nothing to remind him of the old fens.

We have no good contemporary portrait of the old-time fenman. The writers who have left us accounts of the draining of the fens had

little sympathy for the man who had his home in them, and they did not trouble to acquaint themselves with his ways of gaining a livelihood. To Dugdale they seemed an "almost barbarous sort of lazy and beggarly people," who cared only for fishing and fowling, and who had to be watched carefully so that they might not be able to break down the banks heaped up by the reclaimers. They were given, he says, to the making of "libellous songs to disparage the work" of the men who were laboriously converting swamp and mere into arable land and pasture. Nothing pleased them better than to know that "the Bailiff of Bedford was coming" or that "Whittlesea Mere had foaled," by which cryptic sayings they meant that such a flood was rising as would destroy the works of the "undertakers." A curious character, known as "Antiquarian Hall," or "Fen Bill Hall," who was born on a small fen islet, but who, in his latter days, kept a second-hand bookshop in Lynn, where he died in 1825, published some doggerel verses in which he described the fenman as he had known him in the eighteenth century; but probably because his "Chain of Incidents," as he called his little book, was never forged to the last link, it is an unsatisfactory performance so far as it attempts to present life in the Fens from the point of view of the fen-dweller. Of the "low Fen-man," as he calls him, he says:—

"Born in a coy, and bred in a mill,
Taught water to grind, and Ducks for to kill;
Seeing coots clapper claw, lying flat on their backs
Standing upright to row, and crowning of jacks;
Laying spring nets for to catch ruff and reeve,
Stretched out in a boat with a shade to deceive.

Taking geese, ducks, and coots, with nets upon stakes,
Riding in a calm day for to catch moulted drakes;
Gathering eggs to the top of one's wish,
Cutting tracks in the flags for decoying of fish.
Seeing rudds run in shoals 'bout the side of Gill sike,
Being dreadfully venom'd by rolling in slake;
Looking hingles and sprinks, trammels, hoop-nets and teamings,
Few persons I think can explain all their meanings."

In the days when the fens were still undrained, the fishermen and wildfowlers probably dwelt on the islets or the borders of the Great Level; but after the rivers and great drains were embanked the fenmen built their reed-thatched hovels on the banks, where they were secure against floods. A certain "Fen-Parson," who about 1771 attempted a similar task to that in which "Fen Bill Hall" so signally failed, has left us a brief description of one of these hovels:—

"His little hut, which by the bankside stood,
Cover'd with coat of sedge, and walls of mud,
Where each domestic use one room supplies,
His victuals here he dresses, here he lies:
A little lattice to let in the day,
With half-extinguished light and glimm'ring ray."

Descending to prose, this writer tells us that "The life of a North American savage is vastly preferable to his"—the fenman's. "They both live by their gun. The one traverses the woods and mountains in search of his prey, and retires at night to a warm cabin, with plenty of fuel to warm the rigour of the climate; the other in a little skiff, which a puff of wind would overset, paddles about the water till the evening, and comes home wet and cold to his miserable hut, and lies scarcely dry and warm all night in his bed. The American Indian also bears a

near resemblance to our hero; as a fisherman he has his canoe, and ventures upon the shoals in search of fish; he has also his favourite dog to attend him, and hopes that as he is his constant and faithful companion in this life, he will be in another." Here again we have the fenman's life viewed from outside—judged according to the standards of the parsonage. It is a great pity that the "Fen-Parson" had no chance of reading Stewart Edward White's account of the Woods Indians * before he ventured to compare the fenman with the Red Indian. Could he have done so, he might have seen the inside as well as the outside of the fenman's life. The Woods Indian of to-day is the legitimate descendant of the Fennimore Cooper Indian, whom many people, whose acquaintance with American Indians is confined to degraded frequenters of what we are sometimes pleased to call the "outposts of civilisation," would have us believe never existed. "His life," writes Mr. White, "is led entirely in the forests; his subsistence is assured by hunting, fishing, and trapping; his dwelling is the wigwam, and his habitation the wide reaches of the wilderness lying between Lake Superior and the Hudson; his relation to humanity confined to intercourse with his own people and acquaintance with the men who barter for his peltries. So his dependence is not on the world the white man has brought; but on himself and his natural environment." The "Fen-Parson" would have us believe that the life of the North American Indian—whom he calls a "savage," but who was nothing of the kind—was "vastly preferable" to the fenman's. As a matter of fact, if we substitute "fens" for

* In "The Forest," chaps. xv. and xvi.

"forests" we can truthfully say the same of the fenman as Mr. White does of the Woods Indian. The fenman was as well fitted for a life in the fens as the Woods Indian is for a life in the "Silent Places," and one might just as well say that the life of a Broadland eel-catcher is a miserable one as that the fenman's life was miserable in the undrained fens. With his gun, his stalking-sledge, and his nets for taking fish, ruff, and plover, he was quite content with his life on the river or mere, in the reed-bed or the sedge fen; and, naturally enough, when he realised that the drainers of the fens were going to rob him of his means of livelihood he fought against them as best he could, just as the Indian fought against the white man who encroached upon his hunting grounds. We can willingly admit that the reclamation of the fens was a grand work, destined in the end to be of the greatest good to the greatest number; but it does not follow that the men who fought against it were a "miserable" folk because they preferred fishing and fowling to the tending of cattle and the growing of corn."

The coast-bordering parishes between the Ouse and the Nene are West Lynn, North Lynn, Clenchwarton, Terrington St. Clement, and Walpole St. Andrew. West Lynn, which is easily reached from Lynn by ferry, has a church chiefly of the fifteenth century and not without interest; but Clenchwarton Church, which is also in the Perpendicular style, has no very striking feature. That of Terrington St. Clement is one of those magnificent buildings which are the glory of Marshland. It is a large and fine cruciform building, chiefly built of Barnack ragstone, and



TERRINGTON ST. CLEMENT CHURCH.

[*To face p.* 394.

having a massive detached tower which, like others in the district, is recorded to have been used as a place of refuge in times of flood. The numerous spires and spirelets, the splendid range of clerestory lights, the carved battlements of the nave and aisles, the rich ornamentation of the porch, the central lantern, the short transepts, and the tracery of the windows all combine to make this church striking and imposing externally, while within there is much beautiful and grotesque carved work. One of its specially interesting features is its remarkably painted tabernacle font cover.

Terrington Church is said to have been built by Edmund de Gonville, the founder of Gonville Hall, Cambridge. His name appears in connection with the proceedings ensuing upon a series of disastrous floods, which occurred in Marshland during the reign of Edward III. In 1335, "in the winter season . . . so great were the tempests that the towns of Walsoken, West Walton, and Emneth received extraordinary loss by inundations of the sea, insomuch as they became petitioners to the king for some alteration of the tax, of a fifteenth, then granted to him in parliament by the commons of this realm: Whereunto the said king did graciously condescend; and thereupon directed his precept to the treasurer and barons of the exchequer, as also to the assessors and collectors of the same, to abate unto them eight pounds thereof, the whole sum being £60."* In the following year "the sea was so outrageous that it brake down the banks in sundry places, drowned many cattle, and spoiled a great quantity of corn; so that the inhabitants

* Dugdale, p. 254.

of Tilney, Walpole, Walsoken, West Walton, and Emneth, petitioning the king for a remedy therein, he assigned Constantine de Mortimer, John de Hindersete, and John de la Rokell, to make enquiry thereof, and consider some speedy way of redress." These commissioners met at Tilney, and made an elaborate report; but their work, like that of many other commissions, seems to have been done in vain; for in 1338 and 1343 yet other commissioners were appointed, one of the Marshland representatives being "Edmund de Gunevyle, parson of the church of Tyringtone." That he was peculiarly qualified for the task of advising upon the needs of the inhabitants of this devastated district is suggested by the fact that about 1,000 acres of his own parish had been flooded; but whatever steps were taken to remedy matters they were not permanently effective. For in 1607 another terrible flood occurred, owing to the bursting of Terrington Dyke, during a north-easterly gale. Many persons were drowned, and the jury for the hundred reported that "In their distress the people fled to the church for refuge, some to haystacks, some to the baulks in their houses, till they were near famished; poor women leaving their children swimming in their beds, till good people, adventuring their lives, went up to the breast in the water to fetch them out at the windows; whereof Mr. Browne, the minister, did fetch divers to the church upon his back. And had it not pleased God to move the hearts of the mayor and aldermen of Lynn with compassion, who sent beer and victuals thither by boat, many had perished; which boats came the direct way over the soil from Lynn to Terrington." And again, in November, 1613, the sea-bank gave way,

thirteen houses being destroyed and a thousand or more damaged, and the flood extending as far as Wisbech. Nor was this the last occasion on which Marshland reverted for a time to its former condition; for in the church at West Walton the following interesting inscription can be seen:—

"Heavens face is clear
Though the bow appear
Reader nere fear
there is no arrow neare.

To the immortal praise of God Almighty, that saveth his people in all adversities, be it kept in perpetuall memory, that on ye first of November 1613, the sea broke in and overflowed all Marshland, to the grate danger of Mens lives and losse of goods; on the three and twentieth of March 1614 this country was overflowed with the fresh, And on the twelfth and thirteenth of September 1671, all Marshland was again overflowed by the Violence of the Sea.

Surely our Sinns were tinctured in graine
May we not say the labour was in vaine
Soe many washings still the Spotts remaine. 1677."

Before taking leave of Terrington St. Clement —which is a large village and parish consisting of about 9,500 acres of land, and over 200 acres of "out salts"—it is worth remembering that Richard Hakluyt, in "a note drawn out of a very ancient book" which belonged to Thomas Tilney of Hadleigh, in Suffolk, refers to a Sir Frederick Tilney, who was knighted by Richard I. at "Acon in the land of Jurie." This knight, he says, "was of a tall stature, and strong in body, who resteth interred with his forefathers at Terrington, near unto a town in Marshland called by his own name Tilney. The just height of this knight is there kept in safe custody until this very day." I return to him in the next paragraph.

Islington in Marshland is the true *locale* of that charming old ballad "The Bailiff's Daughter of Islington," while Tilney Smeeth, a tract of pasture adjoining the village of Tilney All Saints, is that of a Fenland folk-tale dealing with the exploits of a legendary hero named Hicafric or Hickathrift, of whom Dugdale writes as follows: "Now in Marshland there is a famous plain called the Smeeth, which being common to all the towns thereon maintaineth at least thirty thousand sheep; and yet it is not of a larger extent, in the widest part of it, than two English miles. Of this plain I may not omit to mention a tradition, which the common people thereabouts have viz.: that in old time the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages had a fierce conflict with one Hicafric (then owner of it) touching the bounds there of; which grew so hot that at length it came to blows; and that Hickafric, being a person of extraordinary stature and courage, took an axletree from a cart, instead of a sword; and the wheel for a buckler; and being so armed most stoutly repelled those bold invaders." Near Smeeth Road railway station an artificial mound, which may be a barrow, is called the "Giant's Grave," and is said to be either the grave of Hickafric or of a giant whom he slew; while in Tilney All Saints' Church his big stone coffin was preserved, also his hand-basin. At Walpole St. Peter, too, a curious figure of a satyr built into the outer wall of the church, at the junction of the chancel and the north aisle, is pointed out as that of this strong man of Marshland, whose exploits, I am inclined to believe, may have become mixed up with those of that Sir Frederick Tilney, whom Hakluyt so briefly refers to, but whose "tall

stature" and "strength of body" are particularly mentioned. Folk-lorists, however, have recognised in the legend of Hickafric a sun-myth, and have asserted that it symbolises the drying up of a flood by the heat of the sun.

If the exploits of Hickafric are wonderful, they are more credible than many which have been attributed to the Norfolk saint, Godric, whose birthplace was one of the Walpoles in Marshland. He is said to have been a pedlar, who, after visiting Lindisfarne, the retreat of St. Cuthbert, resolved to lead a religious life, and made pilgrimages to Rome and Jerusalem. He was also the founder of the Abbey of Finchale in Durham, and his life was written by Reginald, a monk of Durham, who credited him with performing no fewer than 225 miracles. Like many other famous saints, Godric is said to have been tempted by the devil in the form of a beautiful woman, whom he adjured so successfully that the tempter soon revealed himself in all his natural hideousness and quickly departed. Like Ingulphus of Crowland, he was often hard beset by evil spirits. On one occasion a pair of them, male and female and equally repulsive, introduced themselves to him as Corenbrand and his sister Carcaveresard, asserting that it was their special mission to incite the heart to malice and every kind of wickedness, and pollute the flesh with luxury and all foulness. So troublesome became these particular hobgoblins, that Godric was compelled to seek the aid of Prior Roger of Durham in getting rid of them; but they were finally exorcised, though they left behind them such a stench that three days elapsed before the prior could get it out of his nostrils.

The scene of the disaster to King John's baggage

train is believed to be a mile or two westward of Terrington, where an arm of the Wash, known as Cross Keys Wash, formerly extended some distance into Marshland, and, in comparatively recent times, could only be crossed at low water by a dangerous ford. There was a tradition that the lost treasure lay hidden in a dank pool, known as King John's Hole, on the left-hand side of the road from Lynn to Long Sutton, and in the coaching days the drivers and guards of the mail coaches frequently pointed out the spot to their passengers. From time to time curious relics found in the neighbourhood have been said to be part of the treasure, but notwithstanding all the delving and dyking done in this part of Marshland King John's crown jewels and gold pieces have yet to be brought to light.

No one who crosses Marshland on his way to Lincolnshire, and who has time to turn aside from the main road, should fail to see some of the fine village churches lying a few miles southward. Those of Walpole St. Andrew, Walsoken, and West Walton—three parishes whose names have the prefix "Wal" (*wal*, Saxon) on account of their proximity to the Roman bank or sea-wall—are especially fine, and it is well worth while to abandon the coast roads for those leading to Wisbech in order to see them. By choosing this route the traveller takes leave at Terrington of the last of the Norfolk coast parishes, and he misses nothing of particular interest by not completing his coast journey except Sutton Washway, the great embanked road constructed by Telford to reclaim several thousand acres of land and carry the road from Norfolk into Lincolnshire.

The author is indebted to the editor of Country Life *for permission to reprint some of the matter contained in this book. It deals chiefly with the wild life of Norfolk and Suffolk, and is embodied in Chapters III., IV., VIII., XIII., XVI. and XIX.*

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